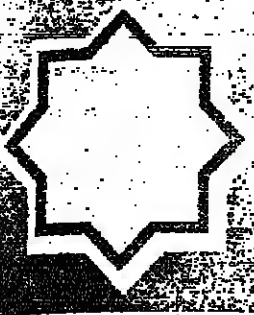
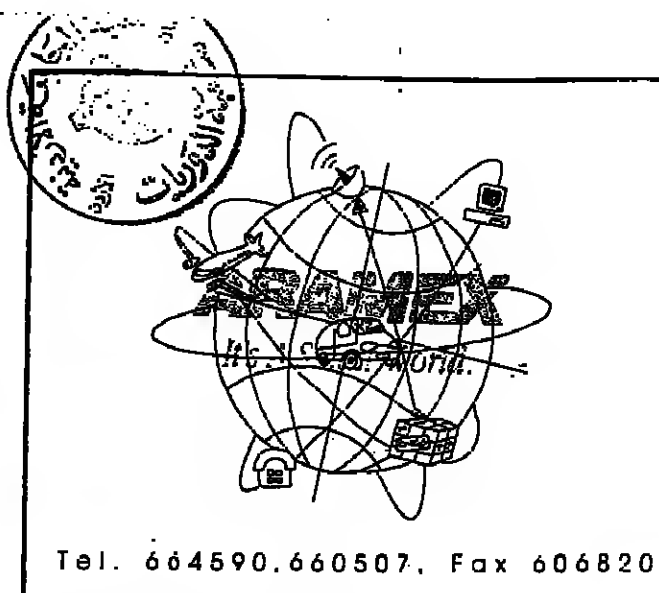


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AMMAN, 25-1 FEBRUARY, 1996; VOLUME 6, NUMBER 39, 350 fils

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

La Jordanie à l'heure du ramadan
A LIRE p. 10 dans LE JOURDAIN

Businessmen unhappy with downsized Iraqi trade accord

By Ahmad Shaker
Special to The Star
MINISTER OF Trade and Industry, Ali Abu Ragheb, and other Jordanian officials are belittling the importance of the downsizing of the bilateral trade accord between Jordan and Iraq from \$400 million to \$220 million annually. Mr. Abu Ragheb assured Jordanians that the decision is an economic and not a political one. He told *The Star* that the downsizing was agreed upon after contacts between Jordanian and Iraqi officials and that Iraq understands the financial and technical causes of such a move. He added that Iraq understands that Jordan could not have continued the relationship under the previous accord.

which has a foreign debt problem of its own. Iraq will continue to supply Jordan with its needs of crude oil, Mr. Abu Ragheb said.



Abu Ragheb

But Jordanian industrialists reacted angrily to the latest agreement and said it will have a negative impact on the national economy and the land transport sector in particular. They called on officials to reconsider the decision.

Jordan's close economic ties with Iraq were always a cause of tension between Jordan and the United States, which called on Jordan recently to stop trading with Iraq.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi dinar showed visible signs of improvement this week, while prices of basic commodities dropped slightly in Iraq, news agencies reported. These developments were attributed to Iraq's sudden decision last week to

humanitarian needs. The resolution also allows Iraq to pump oil for export through the Iraq-Turkish oil pipeline. The resolution also calls for setting aside about 30 percent of oil revenues for the war reparation fund and UN expenses.

Under the resolution, oil deals require the sanctions committee's approval to make sure that prices are close to market prices, but revenues will be deposited in a third party account so that the UN can deduct its share for war reparations and UN expenses.

Iraq had always rejected the resolution as an infringement on its sovereignty, but last week it announced that it was ready to negotiate ways to implement it without prior conditions.

Observers believe Baghdad will accept the resolution but after some changes, foremost of which is the rejection to deduct a share from the revenues to be given to the Kurdish areas of Iraq. If the oil for food deal is concluded it will be a breakthrough for Iraq.

whose currency rallied this week in the Jordanian market. One million Iraqi dinars was sold at JD 315 up from JD 260 two weeks ago. On Wednesday the price rose to JD 400. In Baghdad, the dinar made a good comeback against the US dollar while commodity prices stabilized. One US dollar fetched 2,000 Iraqi dinars compared to 2,650 two days earlier. The Iraqi dinar fetched \$3.2 before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, the price of one kilogram of rice fell from 1,300 Iraqi dinars to 950, flour fell to 450 from 600 and sugar to 1,300 from 1,700.

The Iraqi government is trying to absorb the surplus of Iraqi dinars by raising taxes and tariffs. There are rumors that the Iraqi government will soon announce a decision to reduce government ownership in mixed sectors from 51 percent to 25 percent to open the way to private capital to take over to support the Iraqi economy.

Palestinian voters make clear they accept, however grudgingly, peace deal with Israel



Arafat celebrating his outstanding victory

By Barton Gellman
La Times-washington Post
News Service

JERUSALEM—By their overwhelming turnout and the landslide victory they gave Yasser Arafat, Palestinian voters made clear Saturday that they accept, however grudgingly, the peace deal unfolding with Israel.

Now, after nearly two years of provisional self-rule, they have the occasion to invent a form of government for themselves. The election gave them a chief executive—Arafat—and an 88-seat council dominated by Arafat loyalists but there is no constitution to describe the division of powers. In practice the balance will emerge from whatever competitive struggle now begins.

Few Arafat-watchers suppose he will shed his long inclination to keep control over guns and money in his own firm grip. The question, then, boils down to whether the legislative council will have the will and wherewithal to say no to him from time to time.

"This is a very new experience, and so it is difficult to predict how members will perform," said Haider Abdel Shafi, an Arafat critic and Pal-

estinian elder statesman who won his seat on Saturday with more votes than any other legislative candidate. "I think the test will come when a confrontation of views takes place between the president and council, to see whether members will think for themselves."

Although Israel still retains supreme control of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the primary effect of the ballot is to tighten Arafat's grip on local power and give him a form of legitimacy he never had. Congratulatory phone calls poured in to his Gaza headquarters Monday. US Consul General Edward R. Abington, who visited Arafat there, said their meeting was interrupted by calls from Nelson Mandela and the prime ministers of Turkey and Algeria.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Arafat is going to be using the fact that he now has an elected council to strengthen his hand in negotiations with Israelis," Abington said. "He can claim he has a legitimate elected council which he has to pay attention to, in terms of their opinion, which is something the Israelis

have used for years." There is at least the potential, Abington said, that the election will also place unaccustomed checks on Arafat's power. "I think this is going to be an evolutionary process," he said. "I think there are people who will try to make (the council) a meaningful body."

There are no doubt some legislators who are willing, in principle, to stand up to Arafat. Several are members of his Fatah party who ran as independents because he removed them from the party slate after they won spots in primary elections.

Salah Tamari, in Bethlehem, won twice as many votes as Arafat's favored candidate there, Daoud Zeir. Asked whether Arafat had telephoned to congratulate him, Tamari replied, "No, but I also have yet to phone to congratulate him."

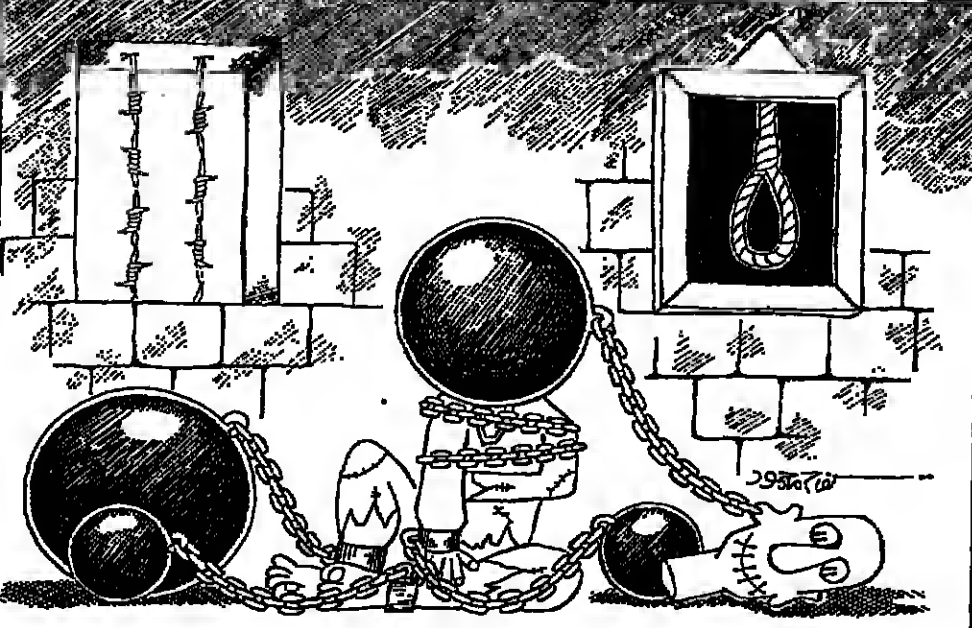
A popular figure who now can claim an authentic mandate of his own, Tamari said in an interview he will not hesitate to vote against Arafat on questions on which they disagree—such as the new president's policy of collecting back taxes

Continued on page 3

Jordanian prisoners abroad get a hearing at last

By Raed Al Abed
Star Staff Writer

AWAD ALI Hassan Al Fao'ri, a Jordanian volunteer, joined the revolution in Palestine in 1948, at the age of 17, during the battle of Abo Shosheh between Arab defenders and the Israelis. He was wounded and captured by the Israelis. In 1950 his family was informed that their son was being held in an Israeli prison in Lyda. In 1960, Al Fao'ri's family in Jordan heard a message on Israeli radio, saying "from Awad to his family in Salt, I send you my greetings." The same message was repeated in 1975. His brother Mohammad went to the West Bank, and made inquiries about his brother to the Israeli police, and was told that they were holding a prisoner named Awad Ali Hassan. This was the same name as his brother's, but without the family name of Al Fao'ri.



Mohammad Fao'ri told *The Star*, "I am sure he is there, so I hired an Israeli lawyer to follow up on the case, but 10 years later, I found out that he was doing nothing and had cheated me all along."

There are no exact figures on the number of Jordanians in Israeli prisons, but some estimates stand at more than 24 prisoners, apart from those who remain missing.

Now Jordanian prisoners in Arab and foreign countries have finally found someone to respond to their cries of help.

counterparts in countries where prisoners are held.

Human rights activists claim that these prisoners were ignored by the concerned authorities, and by our embassies abroad.

"The Government must show more concern and compel our embassies to protect the interests of the Jordanian community abroad," said Lawyer Asma Khader, a human rights activist and president of the Jordanian Women's Union. "Embassies must be provided with qualified staff in the field of human rights."

Recently, the JLA has tried to get more information about these prisoners, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who help by contacting Jordanian embassies and consulates.

"These prisoners are victims of political conflicts between different states. This issue demands a political decision that gives Jordanians the feeling that their Government cares about them," said Khader.

Continued on page 2

Jumping on the media wagon TV stations mushroom in West Bank

By Amjad Tadros
Special to The Star

NABLUS—The northern West Bank city of Nablus might be famous in the Arab World for *Kinaseh* and soap, but these days it is gaining another reputation of being the TV capital of the region. In the past few months, a total of seven TV stations have been set up in the Palestinian city.

In a town where copyright is an alien concept, these stations went for flashy names as Pace, NBC and Gamma which are hardly representative to the state of these amateurish ventures.

their sharp business instincts, jumped on the media band wagon. Before their withdrawal from the city, the Israelis turned a blind eye to these private enterprises. The owners were just called in to the military administrator's office, questioned about their ventures and ordered not to air any politically sensitive material or news. Otherwise, they were allowed to operate as long as they paid their taxes.

Nablus TV, for example, the largest station in town, is located in a little room in the house of the owner Mr. Saleem Sweidan.

To get to the TV station, one has to drive up the steep Jarzime mountain to Mr. Sweidan's house, marked by the 30-meter broadcast antenna on the roof. Knock on the door and his mother will greet you and lead you to a side room which houses the Nablus station.



Election euphoria gets a bit of a homemade TV coverage

The station mainly airs pirated programs recorded from the various satellite channels of the TV owner. The bigger stations air some locally produced programs such as a quiz shows, where people can call in with answers, or the more popular religious show on Monday afternoons, where a Sheikh comes in to answer religious queries from callers.

When asked about how he

measures his audience, Mr. Sweidan smiles and says, "Well, when we have a power failure we receive something like 200 phone calls from people complaining."

The national elections for seats on the Palestinian legislative council provided Nablus TV and all the other stations in this single Palestinian city with a very lucrative market. Candidates booked slots to promote themselves for up to two hours at a time. The prime time rate for commercials ranges between \$1 and \$20. Such promos

took the form of long debates with those candidates with a very hospitable audience consisting mainly of family and friends. However, rumor has it that the upcoming Palestinian National Authority is planning to close these independent stations once the official television network can provide a comprehensive alternative service.

Facing the challenge Palestinians after elections

By Lubna Khan
Special to The Star

AFTER 49 years of living under occupation, Palestinians scored a major victory when they turned out by the masses to vote in their first ever democratically held elections last Saturday. But analysts say the real struggle has only begun.

"The transition period is almost over," said Jawad Anani, former minister of information. "From now on the road is going to be very difficult. To gain success either on the negotiating table or on the ground will take time, but it will be worth every minute."

a one-party rule.

But the election process itself can not be called undemocratic because Islamist parties, Jihad and Hamas, were not kept out of the elections, as they chose not to participate. The opposition parties boycotted the elections and called on their supporters to abstain from voting. Despite their supposed stronghold on Gaza and the West Bank, voter turnout was 93 percent and 75 percent respectively. The outcome of the elections showed the opposition's strategy to be wrong, said Anani. "Election results proved their support was not as strong as they thought it was and they missed the boat for the next four years," he added. "What I suggest is that they consolidate and work within the institutional framework."

Despite the absence of the opposition, analyst Hani Horani said the Fateh victory is not a cause for concern because the party is so internally split among different political trends, that it represents the whole gamut of Palestinian interests.

Included in the political colors of Fateh are regional interest groups, opponents who accuse Arafat of being a dictator, Marxists, Islamists, and pan-Arabists. Despite all of these ideological splits, Fateh has remained consolidated in the Occupied Territories when it comes to opposing Hamas.

Independents won only 15 seats in the self-rule council, while the remaining three were seized by smaller parties. Among the most prominent among the non-Fateh winners are former chief Palestinian negotiator for Israel, Haider Abdel Shafi, who broke from Arafat and ran with the National Democratic Coalition. Abdul Shafi won a seat in Gaza City. Hanan, Ashrawi, former spokeswoman for Shafi, and also an Arafat critic, was elected in Jerusalem. Critics are waiting to see how influential the big names will be in shaping the future Palestinian state.

"The independents in the council are few in number, but

Continued on page 2

World
Report

JORDAN

WEEK

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Awni Abu Ghosh

Export cuts to Iraq: political or economic?

The current state of political tensions between Jordan and Iraq seems to be expanding to include bilateral economic and trade relations—or so some newspapers believe. Indications of this were shown by *Al Hadath* weekly which pointed out the unusual manner in which Iraqi Minister of Commerce Dr Mohammad Mahdi Saleh was received in Jordan during his recent visit. The Ministry of Industry and Trade had dealt with the Iraqi delegation in accordance with the Government's political stance towards Iraq, the paper said. Minister of Trade and Industry Ali Abu Ragheb agreed with his Iraqi counterpart to reduce Jordanian exports to Iraq, allowed by the UN for humanitarian purposes, under a joint economic accord. The pretext given is the increasing amount of debt that Iraq owes Jordan (about \$1200 million).

Al Hadath said that such a reduction has spurred the resentment of both the Iraqi delegation and the Jordanian business community. It added that some Iraqi opposition forces see this measure as having political implications. In regard to this situation, the Iraqi Ministry of Commerce called upon Iraqi businessmen who deal with the Jordanian market to reduce their imports and to turn to Turkey instead. The question that needs to be asked is who will benefit from cutting Jordanian exports to Iraq? And has the Government insured an alternative market for Jordanian exports that were destined to Iraq?

Minister Abu Al Ragheb said there was a common understanding between Jordan and Iraq in regard to the trade protocol signed by the two countries. He added that Iraq fully appreciates the financial and technical constraints which have forced the new arrangement. Abu Al Ragheb stressed that it was Jordan's limited financial resources, not political reasons, that were behind the recent decision.

While Iraq may be able to find alternative sources of goods and services, if it strikes an oil export deal with the UN soon, Jordanian industries stand to lose the most. Good timing Mr Abu Al Ragheb!

First dramatic contestation

A Jordanian lawyer is preparing a legal statement to be presented to the High Court of Justice contesting the decision of the Ministry of Finance to allow the circulation of the Israeli currency in the Jordanian financial and exchange market. *Shihab* weekly said the lawyer is objecting on the basis that the Israeli 5 agora bank-note has a map of 'greater Israel' on it, which represents a negation of the Jordanian state. *Shihab* added that the lawyer notes that 'Article 11-paragraph B' of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty of Wadi Araba stipulates that both state signatories have to annul, in less than three months from the date of exchanging the documents, all forms of enmity, prejudice, discrimination, and hostile attitudes against each other. Awaiting the word from Minister of Finance Basel Jaraneh and the newly appointed CBJ Governor Dr Ziad Fariz.

GUJTU denies contacts with Histadrut

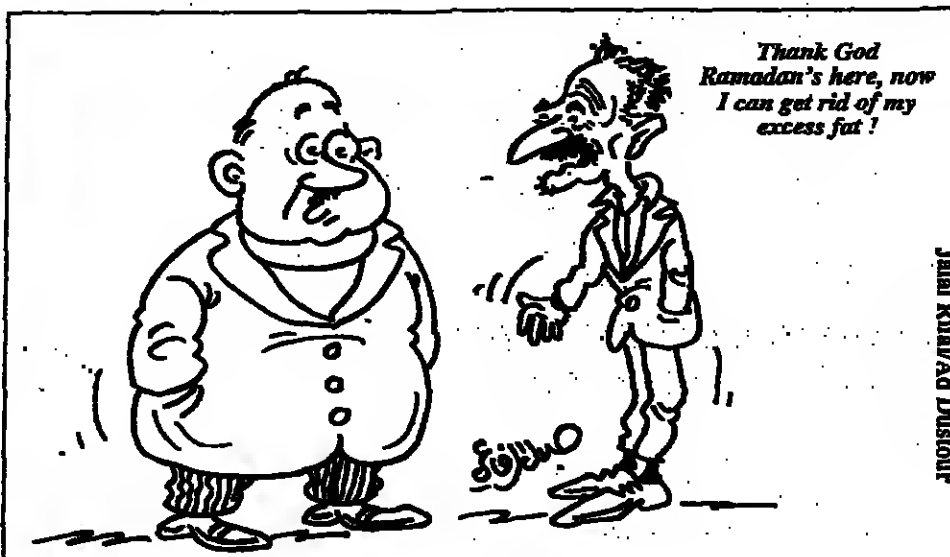
In compliance with the decisions of its constitutional bodies, the General Union of the Jordanian Trade Unions (GUJTU), never made contacts with the Israeli workers union

"the Histadrut." Speaking to *Ad Dustour* daily, the GUJTU deputy secretary-general Mazen Ma'aytah said that such contacts shall never take place unless a decision comes up from the GUJTU official structures. Ma'aytah added that a bilateral meeting between the World Federation of Arab Trade Unions (WFATU) and Histadrut is possible, pending progress on the Syrian, Lebanese-Israeli tracks. He showed concern over Israel's reaction to crucial and suspended issues like the refugee problem, the issue of the displaced, and the realization of a just, durable and honourable peace in the region. Ma'aytah said GUJTU will then study the outcome of such a meeting, and its impact on the Jordanian workers movement, and only accordingly will decide on future steps.

Earlier last week, a Histadrut delegation visited Jordan, and was received by HM King Hussein at Bassman Palace.

Al Wahdat soccer team won't play in Israel

For apparently political reasons, the Jordanian Al Wahdat football team refused to play against any Israeli-Arab team either in Israel or in Jordan. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Al Wahdat declined to



Jalal Rifad/Dustour

Carter, the observer

With his blue-vest, as an international observer to the Palestinian elections of 20 January, former US President Jimmy Carter had the following dialogue with an Israeli policeman at the entrance of one of the ballot centers in East Jerusalem:

Carter: Do policemen take the pictures of the voters?
Police: Yes!

Why?
To prevent problems. We only take pictures for voters inside, not outside the ballots.

But you are taking pictures



for all voters?
No, actually. We take pictures only when there is a problem, otherwise we don't take pictures.

If a Palestinian comes to cast a vote, do you take a picture of him?
(Insisting) No, only when there is a problem.

We don't want you to take pictures, it scares the people.
Don't worry!

Carter: (smiling) But I am worried already!
Then they shook hands!

Kabariti criticized for statements

The recent unrest in the Gulf state of Bahrain concerns Jordanians as a whole. While wishing stability and prosperity for the Bahraini people and their country, Jordanians regard the recent developments there as purely an internal issue. Unless either party involved in those developments in Bahrain asks for assistance, no one has the right to give it. Otherwise it would be interpreted as an interference in the internal affairs of others. This was the gist of Deputy Minister Faisal's attack on Foreign Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti's statements to *Petra* news agency this week in which he outlined Jordan's position on the events in Bahrain. But Ms Faisal suggested that he is sitting in



Kabariti

judgment over who is in the right and who is in the wrong in Bahrain. While expressing Jordan's unequivocal solidarity and support for Bahrain and its measures against terrorism, Kabariti condemned anti-government elements and described them as outlaws.

On Sunday, JTV showed shots of Lower House deputies addressing cabinet ministers. Deputy Faisal criticized Minister Kabariti's statements, too Bahrain as being unhelpful, out in keeping with official policy, and unbefitting the function of a foreign minister.

Kabariti was not shown responding to these accusations.

Zerqa promises to have a bright '96

Six months after becoming the mayor of Zerqa, Dr Mustafa Al Fayad, started to decentralize the police by establishing eight zonal directorates.



Al Fayad

Each directorate is run by a council member. Al Fayad said we created this system of policing to serve the residents of Al Zerqa. The

Zonal directorate will not only increase the efficiency in discharging the Municipality duties but also help make the Municipality closer to the people.

According to Dr Al Fayad's calculation, about half of the budget is paid as wages and salaries for the staff, while the rest is spent on investment projects, he said.

He appealed to the inhabitants of Zerqa to contribute to their repayment obligations so that they can continue to receive the best services. He added that this year there will be more projects including parks, playgrounds and many facilities offered to the public.

Jordanian prisoners abroad get a hearing at last

Continued from page 1

"We received reports about human rights violations, like torture, and imprisonments without trial, around the Arab world."

Human rights activists noticed that there is no clear information about the number of prisoners, especially in Kuwait, Iraq and Syria. In addition, there are other forgotten prisoners around the world, in places like Germany, the Philippines, the United States, and Britain, of whom the Government has no record.

In Kuwait, the estimated number of prisoners is 46, but some families whose sons do not appear on the list, demand to know the fate of their loved ones.

Iraq released all political prisoners except Jordanians.

Iraqi officials claim that they have 57 Jordanian prisoners, but the local authorities are aware of a larger number. The case of Jordanian prisoners in Syria is even more ambiguous and requires more urgent action. Syria claims that it holds 19 prisoners, but human rights activists confirmed that there are another 31. The tragedy lies in some reports that speak of the elimination of some Jordanians in Syria. Two names were mentioned by human rights organizations, Hani Ubiedat and his sister Wafa; two students who were arrested by the Syrian Deterrence Forces, and then shot dead.

Reports coming out of Syria talked of the terrible conditions that the Jordanian prisoners are subjected to.

The Egyptian authorities claim that they have eight pris-

oners, but activists confirm that they know of more prisoners, from the appeals that they receive from families.

"I feel that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not doing its job towards our prisoners. We need serious efforts to save the dignity of Jordanians outside the country," said Theb Abdallah, head of the Public Liberties Committee of the Lower House. "There are Jordanians who were sentenced to death in Arab countries for no logical reason."

"As far as prisoners of conscience are concerned, we will work for their release without conditions, because whatever the circumstances of their arrest, these arrests are illegal," said Dr Kamal Nassir, president of the JLA, the Committee of Freedoms in the Arab World, and the Arab Lawyers Union.

"Prisoners allegedly accused of crimes, will be dealt with on a humanitarian basis, to ensure their right for a just trial. We will send committees of lawyers to handle these cases."

The JLA will hold a workshop on the issue of these prisoners by the end of the month.

Jordanian human rights activists demand that the Government support their efforts for the release of Jordanian prisoners abroad and missing persons. A number of committees are being formed to go to the countries where Jordanian prisoners are being held.

Delegates from the JLA and other human rights organizations have met with Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and the Foreign Minister Mr Abdel Karim Kabariti last Wednesday. They discussed the issue of the prisoners and appealed to the Government for action and also asked the Prime Minister to finance the committees that are being formed. The meeting was latter described as positive.

Palestinians after elections

Continued from page 1

from the experience of the Arab world. If they are active and united, they can create a coalition to influence government beyond the picture created by their numbers," said Horani.

The elections mark the beginning of Palestinian self-rule, and consequently, the beginning of Israeli-Palestinian relations. But, just as significantly, they signify the beginning of a new relationship between Palestinians and their Arab neighbors. "From now on Arab countries have to deal with a new Palestinian identity," said Anani. "This requires an adjustment on the part of the Palestinians and their Arab neighbors, particularly Jordan."

Palestine has its own demands and needs and Jordan must recognize this when dealing with Palestinians, said Anani. "Palestinians have to out-grow their stage of infancy and unpredictability and deal as mature partners with Jordan," he said. Maturity means giving up the paranoia that Jordan

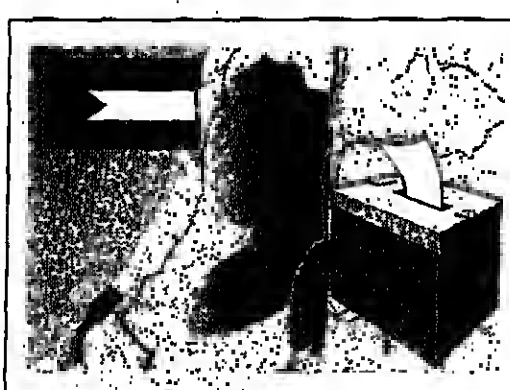
hopes to expand its kingdom to Jerusalem and the West Bank.

As Palestinians move closer to creating an independent state, they must lay the groundwork for stronger political and economic relations with Jordan and Egypt, their closest Arab neighbors. "The common interests between the two are by far greater than the current initiative to deal with them," Anani added.

The fact that the elections went so smoothly "proves that the PNA and the Palestinians have the organized cadres which can build the state structure in the future," said analyst Ghazi Al Sadi.

But now that the elections are over, the real challenges

will begin, he added. Palestinians must devise a plan to build the Palestinian economy, which was destroyed during the Israeli occupation. They must overcome an unemployment crisis, and prepare for the final status negotiations to be held in May. The talks will include the most contentious issues of the peace accords, including total withdrawal of Israeli forces from PNA territories, dismantling Israeli settlements and the fate of Jerusalem.



Jordanian cinema critic passes away

AMMAN (Star)—The cinema critic Hani Abu Ghannimeh passed away last week at the age of 48. Abu Ghannimeh is well known in the world of cinema criticism.

Abu Ghannimeh was born in Irbid in 1948. Devoted to the art of film Mr Abu Ghannimeh had enormous knowledge on the Arab and international film industry. He participated in many international film festivals. And he was a member of the panel for a number of these. He wrote more than 20 books in Arabic on the world of cinema most important of which is *Palestinian Cinema: Dialogues With World Cinema*. *Cinema: Phenomena and Meanings*.

His latest books were criticism and its approach. He was deeply involved with the Jordan Cinema Club. Mr Abu Ghannimeh wanted to create a critical audience, viewing public that would appreciate the Art of cinema. Hence, he particularly welcomed films that showed depth and meaning. The Cinema Club showed obscure films which were not usually available to the viewing public.

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● Foreign female required to share a fully furnished flat at Dahlat Al-Rashid, near Jordan University. Telephone, central heating and garage available. Rent paid monthly. Call at 079-20814.

● Furnished first floor flat for rent. Three saloons, three bedrooms, private entrance, full accommodations telephone at Dahlat Al-Rashid, Ma'rakeh Al Fajer street. For further information contact 663006.

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Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics is on

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Palestinian voters make clear they accept, however grudgingly, peace deal with Israel

Continued from page 1

of collecting back taxes owed originally to Israel's occupation authority and his use of military courts to try "security offenses."

"I am more Fatah than any of them," he said, speaking of the Arafat-backed party members who won seats. Those "official" Fatah candidates won a majority of the council—more than 50 of 88 seats.

Every candidate among the ministers Arafat appointed to the interim authority that governed since May 1994—including Ahmed Korei, Nabil Shaath, Freih Abu Medein and Saeb Erekat—also won.

But it is not clear that all of the Fatah victors will side with Arafat on every vote. Some, such as Ramallah's Marwan Barghout, represent the West Bank's home-grown leadership and have long been suspicious of Arafat. Others, such as north Gaza's Emad Falouji, are members of opposition parties whom Arafat appointed to Fatah slates in an effort to co-opt them into the council.

Even so, the predominant view among Palestinian commentators is that a significant challenge to Arafat's dominance is unlikely.

"Unfortunately the opposition in this council is going to be weak," said Ziad Abu Amr, a Bir Zeit University professor of political science who won a seat as an independent in Gaza City.

"These people will express their opinions freely but I'm not sure they can stand up to positions undertaken by Arafat. He has a lot of legitimacy, he has a monopoly of the bases of power, he has good relations with the Israelis and the Americans, and no one can challenge him right now."

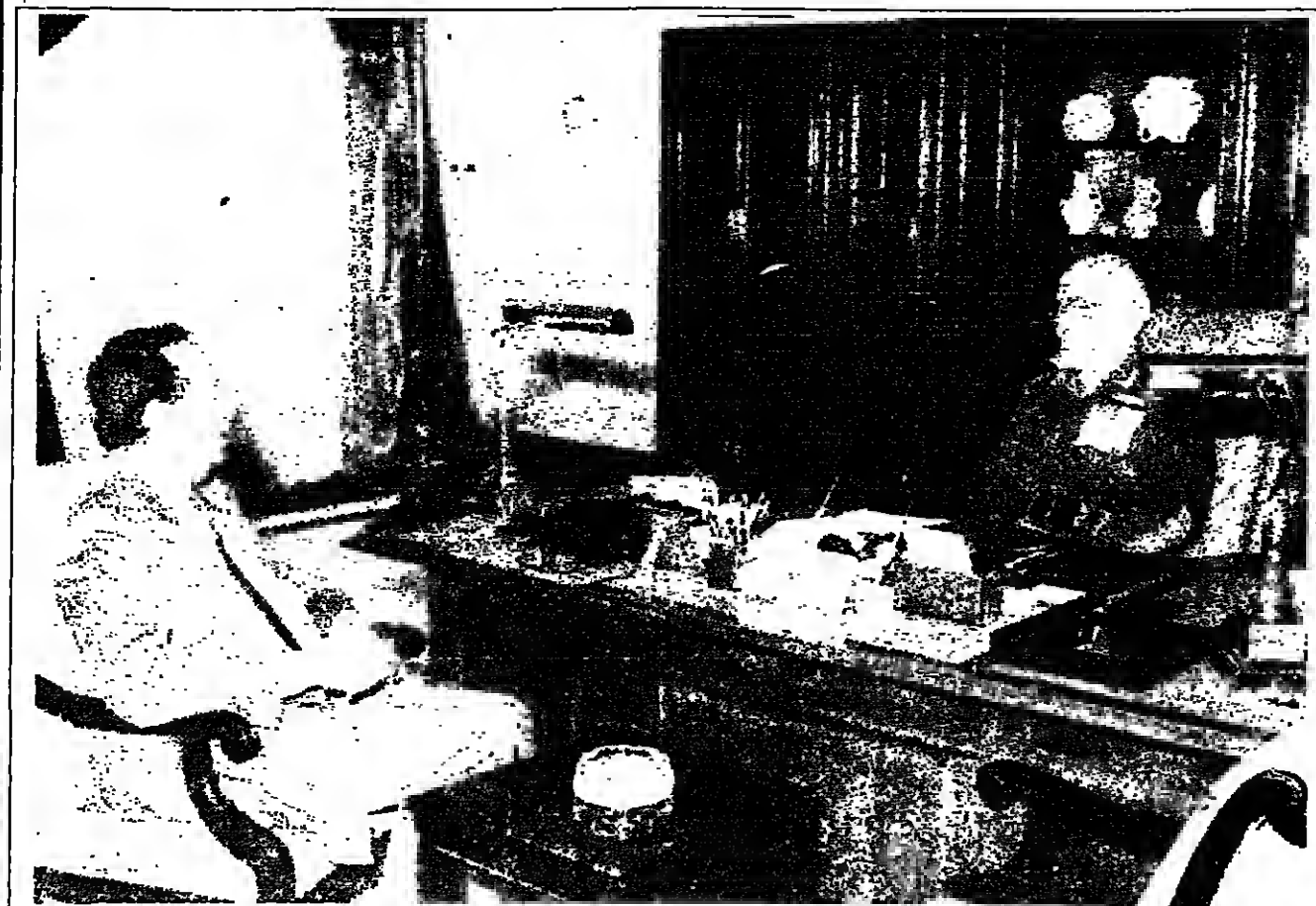
The council's first test will be its choice of a speaker and preparation of a basic law on governmental powers. Abdel Shafi would be a strong and independent speaker, and his stature is unrivaled except by Arafat, but Arafat can probably block him from the job if he chooses.

Abdel Shafi has stated bluntly that under Arafat so far there has been "no democracy, no free press ... and no real respect for due process and legal proceedings."

He was referring to Arafat's arrest of a newspaper editor and human-rights figures who displeased him. Until recently, Abdel Shafi himself had seemed a fearless critic. But in an interview in his Red Crescent office a few days before the election, he was asked whether he thought his remarks put him at risk. "Maybe now," he said.

Arafat still has exclusive control of six rival security forces, and he has also resorted to ruling by decree.

Abdel Shafi said that if Arafat tries to make a law by any means other than a council majority, the council "should stand up to him." If he or any other council member is arrested, Abdel Shafi said, "it will be a coup d'etat."



● King Hussein pays a special visit to the Prime Ministry, Tuesday. He was assured by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker that the Government is doing its best to ensure the guarantee of food supplies during the holy month of Ramadan. Earlier, he received a number of congratulatory notes from Arab and Islamic leaders at the start of the feast.

Theib Abdallah of the Public Liberties Committee 'We feel the ceiling of freedom is currently touching the heads of citizens—while seated!'

This Parliament has come at a tough period. It's power is limited. There is frustration that is affecting everybody, deputies or citizens

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr Theib Abdallah is a British-educated physician, social activist, and Amman deputy in the Lower House. As a member of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), he heads the Lower House Public Liberties Committee. He talked to The Star's Raed Al Abed this week about the state of public liberties and democracy in Jordan.

How do you view the situation of public liberties and democracy in the country?

Compared to many third world countries, we are proud of our democracy and the freedom that we have. This is something that is strengthened by His Majesty King Hussein's wisdom and patience. But we say that lately democracy has retreated. The Government started to tighten the noose around freedom. We feel the ceiling of freedom is currently touching the heads of citizens—while seated! This ceiling must be raised so citizens can walk freely.

There are violations against public freedoms, this harms the image of the country and harms the individual's rights. It harms democracy.

Currently we know that there are many prisoners of conscience, recently there has been an increase in the number of cases where people are charged with slander (against Royalty)—but there is an exaggeration in the use of the law and it ends up hurting many innocent people.

There are many arrests without a warrant from the general attorney. Sometimes, there are cases of police brutality and we consider such practices as violations. There are cases where people are arrested on charges of conspiracy to topple the regime, but two days later they are released and the case is never brought to trial. If this proves anything, it proves that the authorities are acting nervously and erratically. People get hurt by such rash policies.

But what are the reasons behind such practices?

I think it is the nature of this era. Despite all of these negative aspects, and compared to other countries we still have something to be proud of in terms of democracy and freedom.

Where is your role as a Public Liberties Committee?

Our role is to point out the negative aspects in this field, and to try to focus the light on these violations in order to limit them and to keep the country's image from getting tarnished. We want to do this in order to revive democracy and protect public liberties. We undertake this in cooperation with the Government which we find to be—sometimes—forthcoming.

You said sometimes you find the Government cooperative. Does this mean it is uncooperative most of the time?

I meant to say we find the Government cooperative at times, and at other times we do not find it so. Or it is slow in responding to our requests.



Theib Abdallah

For example the cases of Laith Shbeilat, Atta Abu Rashid—spokesman of the illegal Islamic Tahrir Party—and Bassam Al Daou'r of the same party. Al Daou'r is accused of being a member of an illegal party. Under the law and if he is convicted, he could receive a six-month imprisonment term. So far he has been held in jail for more than 10 months and he is suffering from tuberculosis.

As for the Shbeilat case, I think he is being accused of saying things he did not say. His lawyers are prevented from being alone with him, although the court had ruled twice on this particular point in his favor. But the administration of the prison has banned the defence lawyers from meeting privately with their client. They even refused to allow Mr Shbeilat a wool coat to protect him from the cold of his cell because he is suffering from rheumatism. Also we wonder why was he not released on bail? The law allows him all these rights. Such practices bring many questions. Is our Government serious about democracy? Does it really want to respect public freedoms? I say, our homeland can only be safeguarded and developed by free citizens who enjoy their freedom and can practice democracy without chains and fear.

According to some sources, the State Security Court has ruled in 125 cases of slander against the Royal Family in 1995, and 18 cases since the beginning of 1996 which are awaiting rule. All of these cases are against Islamic activists. What does this mean to you?

The peace era has given the Government causes to become alarmed for the slightest reason. Now it is raising the stick in the face of the opposition, in particular the Islamists. Everybody knows the opposition in our country. It is a peaceful one which performs within the law. The Jordanian opposition is a non-violent one and this is something we are proud of.

The press is being ham-

pered by many. Courts are busy with press cases. Recently, the press sector was shocked when the criminal court began looking into the case brought against Al Majd weekly which is accused of disturbing Jordan's relations with Bahrain. Do you think the case warrants the involvement of the criminal court? Do you think the Jordanian press is violating the principles of its profession?

We are for responsible freedom of expression. All of us are travelling in one boat, freedom of expression does not allow any of us to puncture a hole in this boat because all of us would drown.

I am surprised by the details of the case against Al Majd weekly. The newspaper has published an article in which the writer expresses the wish that his country will one day walk along the same steps as Jordan—in other words he appreciates Jordan and its role. I think the writer must be thanked for his position. Amazingly, the chief editor of the newspaper was sued. We have full trust in our judicial system. But I oppose the imprisonment of journalists and putting them with thieves and murderers.

Journalists must enjoy freedom and we must restore their dignity. Journalists are qualified to organize themselves and to put a limit to any press violation. I think we have to give them this chance.

Jordanian People's Democratic Party (Hashd) is accused of alleged links with the DFLP, a Palestinian leftist organization. The same accusations were raised against the party before it was legalized three years ago. Now the case is before the courts. How do you view such a unique trial in the history of Jordan?

The Public Liberties Committee of Parliament invited Mr Salim Al Nahas, the general secretary of Hashd, and his colleagues, for a talk.

They talked about their suffering before their party was legalized. Mr Nahas talked about how they are facing the same charges now, about link to outside organizations. He

Coffee crisis turns sour

By Munther Hamdan
Special to The Star

THE DIFFERENCES between the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) and the Ministry of Supply are reaching confrontational levels. The crisis started when the (NSCP) decided last December to launch a boycott campaign against coffee to protest high prices. It called on all sections of society to boycott coffee as its prices were increasing in Jordan but decreasing to world markets. But today the issue has narrowed down to a bilateral confrontation between the Ministry and the Society, both of which are busy pelting each other with accusations.

President of NSCP, Dr Muhammad Ubeidat, accused the Ministry of bias for favoring traders at the expense of consumers. He argued that the Ministry should not interfere in the pricing policy since it had floated coffee prices in July 1994. "I can't understand why the Ministry of Supply insists upon favoring the position of traders while ignoring that of the consumers," Ubeidat told The Star. The Ministry, he added, must play a compromising role.

The head of the Studies and Researches Dept. at the Ministry of Supply, Mr Yahya Qawasmeh, rejected this accusation. "The Ministry of Supply is not biased. In fact it's main concern is consumer interest," he emphasized.

He said that the NSCP's campaign is not based on fixed numbers and statistics, but relies on arousing people's emotions. The Ministry monitors the fluctuation in world prices of the most basic commodities daily, he added. The problem was aggravated recently when the Ministry of Supply published a letter in Al Ra'i daily refuting Ubeidat's claims. The Ministry pointed out that Dr Ubeidat made contradictory statements regarding coffee prices over the past two months. It claimed on 23 December 1995 he said coffee prices should not exceed JD 2.25 per kilogram since international prices did not exceed JD 1200-1500 per ton. Officials at the ministry added that Ubeidat revised his figures in January and said a kilogram of coffee should not sell for more than JD 3.25.

But the NSCP strongly rejected these accusations, calling them unfounded. In an article in AD Dustour on 20 January, the Society's head said that Minister of Supply Adel Qudah is personalizing the issue. Dr Ubeidat added that it was the Society which called for the re-pricing of coffee and to claim that it had no information about world prices is untrue.

"The prices are low on the world markets and there should be a principle by which we can price coffee without causing harm to anybody," Qawasmeh told The Star. "In pricing, we consider all aspects of the trading process which include loss in value of coffee after it is processed, the cost from the place of the origin, customs fees and the profit margin."

However, the Society said that the Ministry of Supply depends on customs statements given to them by traders. Dr Ubeidat said the customs law considers these documents confidential and that it would be illegal to show them to anyone.

But the Ministry rejected this logic. "During the forum held in Ad Dustour last month, we showed Ubeidat the application we submitted to the Customs Dept., to request that they should provide us with these customs statements," Qawasmeh said. He added that it is difficult to deal with Dr Ubeidat since he denies to having seen this application.

Rashed Hassan, general manager of Al Andalus Mill Co., said the NSCP has not been objective in its accusations. The Ministry is the official side that is responsible for protecting the consumer and conducts research to make sure that the profit margin is distributed evenly.

The argument over the percentage of higher quality Brazilian grains and Robusta grains, which are of lower quality, in the coffee on the Jordanian market is making the problem more complicated. While Qudah insists that the percentage of these grains is equal, the NSCP said that at the time it announced that the cost of coffee should be 3.25JD per kg, the ministry had not specified the percentage of each kind of grain in the mixture. "The percentage of each kind in the mixture is set according to specifications and measures put down by the Ministry," Qawasmeh told The Star.

The NSCP believes that if the Ministry continues to side with traders, the other parties in the profit circle will lose. "We should know that most traders also have their own mills, which limits the profit to a small number of dealers," Ubeidat said.

The question of why the ministry floated prices is raised frequently. Qawasmeh said that the reason behind the floating is the shortage of quantities which followed the decrease in world markets. "We floated prices to encourage traders to import coffee but since then we put a ceiling which no one can exceed," he added. But the NSCP claims that the traders themselves did not want this floating. They believe that such floating will create competition. "If we want free trade, floating is necessary. The law of supply and demand must prevail," Hassan told The Star.

Despite all of these recriminations, the NSCP continues to call for the boycott. Ubeidat said it will continue as long as the ministry keeps ignoring the consumers' interest.

But the question remains, what is the real effect of the boycott on traders. Hassan claims that the boycott is only having a limited effect.

The problem has been given more attention than it deserves. Is coffee such a basic commodity that the increase in its prices can be seen as catastrophic? "I own this mill and think coffee is a superfluous commodity despite the negative effects it has on one's health," said Hassan. "We are preoccupied with this issue while problems like unemployment remain unresolved."

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LURIE'S WORLD



Our Say....

What after the elections

THIS WEEK'S Palestinian elections are a cause for celebration not only to the 88 winners, who deserved voter's confidence, but also to the Palestinian people for having elected into office the first representative council in their history.

Despite the sporadic procedural problems that surrounded the election campaign, the consensus of nearly three thousand international observers and journalists is that the elections were free and democratic only adds to the legitimacy of the new legislative council and its president.

What now? Very soon, Yasser Arafat will meet, for the first time as an elected chairman, the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, and will officially hand over the names of the elected members of the council. Chairman Arafat will immediately begin his easy consultations on the appropriation of his 24-portfolio cabinet, and then present the agenda for the next and final stage of negotiations with the Israelis on the final solution, including the issues of Jerusalem, refugees and displaced, settlements, water and borders.

True, the new council and cabinet do not reflect faithfully the colorful spectrum of the political life of the PNA areas. Neither is there any substantial difference among the Palestinian political forces in regard to the issues that need to be resolved. The difference, however, is how.

Mr Arafat, his cabinet and the elected council will do wise not to ignore the opposition in handling the coming negotiations. They should also expand their grassroots support when they assume a more open contact and consultations with the opposition parties and movements. After all, and in spite of Israeli redeployments, both the elected council and the opposition are still living under Israeli rule. Their agreement on the main issues and the mechanisms of realizing the national interests of the Palestinian people constitute the principal card in the forthcoming and tough negotiations. In this very respect, they have to learn from the experience of the Israeli negotiators. Israel has in fact not only invested in inter-party differences within the Israeli political establishment in her course of negotiations with the PLO, but also on the various approaches within the Labor's rank and file.

More importantly, the PNA has to draw effective lessons from the experience of the Palestinian national movement inside and outside Palestine. Deciding on the fate of a whole nation by raising hands in a meeting can only be effective in an aggregated nation in its homeland with sharp contradicting forces.

For the Palestinians, it is not, Consensus among the different organizations, movements, and political parties in the West Bank and Gaza is the cornerstone of the Palestinian potential vis-a-vis powerful Israel, and for the proper solution of the pending issues as well. Chairman Arafat should learn quickly how to run his new entity as a politician, banking on the precious support of Palestinian masses as he enters the final and most crucial phase of negotiations on the road to an independent state. ■

Letters to the Editor

A friendly note, visit Eritrea!

Dear Sir:
AS AN Eritrean I was astounded by Dr Khairi Janbek's (Article: Eritrean tragedy) characterization of Eritrea and the conflict over Hanish Islands with Yemen. The Eritrean government has said all along that it favors international arbitration on the matter, if necessary. The government of Eritrea has also been very patient, unlike the emotions of Yemen officials who spoke ineffectually during rallies gathered for the purpose of condemning Eritrea. Unfortunately, Dr Janbek and other Arabs in the region, in an effort to rally behind their fellow Arab country (Yemen), have been quick to condemn Eritrea. Worse, Dr Janbek insults and belittles Eritrea as a creation of the Arabs and as a 'Frankenstein' 'megalomaniac'—charges that are without any foundation. Eritrea is nobody's creation, but Eritreans. We suffered for more than three decades and paid a heavy price to get where we are

right now. Just because Eritrea is poor, it should not be expected to abdicate its responsibility of defending its territories no matter how far or difficult the task might be. I don't know what Dr Khairi Janbek's motivation or intentions were, but his readers would have been better served if he had stuck with the truth and the basic journalistic principle—gathering news and informing the readers.

(This is just one Eritrean surprised by the vilification of his beloved country by supposedly friendly neighbors!) Finally, I would like to invite Khairi Janbek to visit Eritrea and see for himself and find out more about our country and its people. No hard feelings, of course. ■

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Eritrean invasion of Hanish island:

A war by proxy, or status quo politics?

We are bound to say that Israel is not likely to sacrifice her peace with the Arab world for the sake of Eritrea. Neither would Israel choose to get involved in this issue publicly. Naturally, Israel will continue to wait and see how serious the Arab reaction is.

By Awni Abu Ghosh

ECONOMIC POWER is the major drive of the New World Order. In the absence of a sharing partner in the shaping of international politics, the dominant power cares nothing about legitimate or historical rights. Its main concern focuses only on its own interests and the means of insuring them.

Proceeding from their own interests and taking opportunity of this unprecedented chance, politicians in developing countries try to find a place in this political structure.

With the exception of France (which has well-established interests in Somalia and Djibouti), no western-traditional ally of Middle Eastern countries took a stance on the Eritrean invasion of the Yemeni Hanish Island. Even Israel, the most affected country in the region from the closure of the straits in the northern and southern Red Sea in the 1967 and 1973 wars, has so far said nothing on the issue.

Out of political ignorance, some commentators have blamed Eritrea for its aggression against the Hanish Islands on the basis of past Arab support for the independence of Eritrea. This has nothing to do with the logic of politics. Neither did the Eritreans accept assistance from the Arabs at the expense of their cause, nor did those Arabs have in mind any intention of being repaid by the Eritreans after independence.

Arab assistance to the Eritrean people's struggle against emperor Haile Selassie was incomparable to that provided when they were fighting against the pro-Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. However, with its large Arab-Muslim community, Eritrea has been an independent state since 1991, and has moved from the revolutionary stage to the state-building era.

Eritrea is a poor country with weak socio-economic in-

frastructures.

Genuine Arab

assistance to an

Arab-Muslim

dominated Eri-

trea nation

should have

continued after

independence.

Otherwise no

commentator

should be sur-

prised by the

Eritrean inva-

sion of the Ye-

meni Hanish Is-

land using

Israeli offen-

sive boats and

machine guns.

The Arab

states were di-

vided in the

Arab league

meeting of

1990 on the Iraqi

occupation of

Kuwait. Moreover,

anti-Iraq action

in the league actually

was part of the war

against Iraq. Today,

the Arab League

member states are

unanimous against

the Eritrean occupa-

tion of the Yemeni

Island, but no

one moves to liberate

the Arab territory

from a foreign

country. Doesn't

Hanish deserve

that solidarity? Or

does the Arab

League wait for

mediation from

somewhere else?

The Red Sea is an

important regional

and international

navigation basin.

With nearly

2000-kilometer long,

and 250,000 square

kilometers of

water space, the

Red Sea borders

five-Arab littoral

countries—Egypt,

Saudi Arabia,

Yemen, Somalia,

and Djibouti—

and one non-Arab

state, Eritrea. In

Red Sea maritime

dimensions, Eritrea

has the third longest

coastline after

Saudi Arabia and

Egypt. More

than 70% of the

isolated, and

almost uninhabited,

280 islands in

the Red Sea (mostly

in its southern part)

belong to

Arab countries. Some

of them were

put at the disposal

of the Eritrean

guerrillas during

the struggle for

independence.

The Mengistu

regime collaborated

with the Israelis

and gave them access

through the

'Ethiopian' fishing

docks in



the Eritrean Maswa port

to check these fighters. The

strategic location of these islands

controls the navigation routes

to the Bab Al Mandeb Strait in

the south, and to the Indian

and Atlantic oceans. Hence,

the questions: Is it the intention

of Eritrea to supervise

world navigation in this strategic

basin by occupying Han-

ish? With the silence of Israel

and the US, aren't the Arab

states aware of the implica-

tions and objectives of such a

deliberate military action

carried out by a poor, newly-born

Eritrea? Can this country survive

if the Arab littoral states agree

to preserve their legitimate

rights of maintaining

sovereignty over their territory?

Who would come to assist

Eritrea then?

We are bound to say that Is-

rael is not likely to sacrifice

her peace with the Arab world

for the sake of Eritrea. Neither

would Israel choose to get in-

volved in this issue publicly.

Naturally, Israel will continue

to wait and see how serious

the Arab reaction is.

There is no doubt that Eri-

trea would greatly benefit from

Arab assistance and would

achieve more through coopera-

tion and interdependence with

her Arab neighbors. Eritrean

leadership makes an unformid-

able mistake if it thinks that

stubborn, old-aged positions in

crucial political conflicts

would work in the new world

era. Procrastination and man-

euvering would not help the

Eritreans neither in their aspi-

rations to sovereignty, nor to

development.

Unconditional negotiations,

good neighborly relations, and

cooperation with the Arab

states are the reasonable and

accepted means of ushering in

a new phase of consolidating

the interests of all peoples of

this strategic region, including

those of the Eritreans. Gone

has the time of status quo poli-

tics, as has the time of war by

proxy.

Arab states should not deal

with the Eritrean invasion of

Hanish in the way a "hijacker"

threatens his addressee author-

ity.

Otherwise, their 'patience'

or 'flexibility' would be inter-

preted in terms of impotence.

The mediation of a third party

could be acceptable, but not in

the sense of courting only Ar-

abs to honour regional and

world peace. It is the external-

ly-driven aggressor who is to

blame for destabilization in the

region, and even to politically

pay for that fatal mistake

against the Eritrean people in

the first place. ■

Bosnia

Clinton's feather cap

By Carrie Nelle Moye
Star US Correspondent

THE PEACE accord for Bosnia, brokered by US President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State Warren Christopher and their warren force, is a feather in the cap of Clinton and his administration. Interestingly, this accomplishment serves as a shameful denoting of Europe's failure on its own turf.

The disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the consequent degeneration into a conflict that has been the worst war situation witnessed by Europe since the end of World War II, posed grave challenges to the continent. There existed the distinct danger of igniting the entire Balkan Peninsula, plus Turkey, possibly Greece, Bulgaria, Armenia and others. Such a conflict, which still remains a possibility, would engulf Europe, the Mediterranean and the Middle East in a nightmare scenario of intertwining hatreds, prejudices, and vengeance among ethnicities and religions, and would put into question all international boundaries that came into existence after 1945.

Europe was and continues to feel threatened by major movements of refugees and displaced populations spilling across borders. This has challenged the tranquility, peace and "cleanliness" of Western Europe's pampered populations, thus spreading more oil on the fires of racism and ethnic hatred, nourishing an already strong Far East revival in the area.

The list of anger and self-perceived threats to Europe is much longer, but the above examples suffice to denote the reasons for its insecurity. Yet, despite these potential threats, Europe could not get its act together and take a bold, concerted action to quell the fires of ethnic and religious strife in Bosnia and the rest of former Yugoslavia. Instead, Europe spoke in cacophonous dis-

certed voices, with one European power supporting a specific faction in Bosnia, and other powers supporting others. Thus Germany's client became the Croats; Russia (Asian, but in this context European) favored the Serbs; the British and French swayed but settled on an attitude of being for and with nobody, occasionally voicing some sympathy for the horrors suffered by the Muslims—but not the usurpation of their land and their rights.

Europe was hiding behind

the United Nations and its

emasculated peace-keeping

forces. These forces, in turn,

were on futile peace/

reconciliation/mediation mis-

sions led by outdated and out

of function retired dignitaries

like Lord Owen whose inefficacy

was surpassed only by

Bureaucracy's personal repre-

sentative Yasushi Akashi,

whose only accomplishment

on behalf of the UN was to

wear an insipid smile of sil-

lence in the face of a thousand

'whys' when the terrible

massacres in Bosnia occurred.

Yes, Europe acted in a cowardly

manner. All were afraid

of getting involved. They sacri-

ficed dignity for comfort, prin-

ciples for personal causes, sacri-

ficed their co-European

Bosnians for fear of responsi-

bility. In truth, Europe has be-

come fat and insensitive, le-

thargic and cowardly, even in

the face of fires burning into

its own home. Europe was un-

able to summon the courage to

join a unified force until Clin-

ton seized the initiative

as the leader of NATO.

His courage and eloquence

defending his Bosnia policy to

skewers in Congress effectively

dwarfed the meek politicians in

Europe.

This is not 1916

when America went to

rescue the democracies

of Europe from Prus-

sian militarism; it is not

1941 when the US

went to rescue Europe

from its own shame and in-

sensitivity. A hardy

bravo for Clinton who

became President in

1992 as a green novice

in world affairs and

who now marches to-

ward the end of his first

term in office as a

statesman of world sta-

tus. His actions have

led to peace between

Jordan and Israel,

peace for the Palesti-



New legitimacy, old problems confront coming era

By Marjorie Miller
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JERUSALEM—In the last four months, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat signed a key peace agreement with Israel, mourned the slaying of his Israeli partner, Yitzhak Rabin, assumed control of Arab towns in the West Bank and became the first freely elected president of his people.

Arafat won the election with 88 percent of the vote, exposing the weakness of opposition groups such as the extremist Hamas, and effectively carving the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in stone.

Now comes the hard part. Arafat must use his new legitimacy to tackle the tough issues still on the negotiating table with Israel—Jerusalem, the city both sides claim as their capital; the Palestinians' demand for statehood; Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and the fate of Palestinian refugees.

Clearly the 65-year-old Arafat has won more in his short life as a peacemaker than in all his decades of making war on Israel. The relatively clean election suddenly makes him the Arab world's most democratic leader, and strengthens his hand for the final stage of peace negotiations that are to begin in May.

But it does not guarantee him any happy solutions. Before the final negotiations can even begin, Arafat must make good on his promise to amend articles of the Palestine Liberation Organization's charter calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. In the interim accord Arafat signed with Rabin last September, he committed the Palestinian National Council—the PLO's legislature—to eliminating the hostile articles within two months after Palestinian elections.

Many members of the PNC, however, are leftist hard-liners, exiled for years, who oppose the changes and view Arafat's step-by-step peace deal as bowing to Israel. In the past, Arafat has used delays to finesse the issue, but now Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who faces his own election bid this year, says he will halt any further Israeli troop redeployment and the rest of the peace process if Arafat does not keep his word.

Arafat may try to increase the size of the approximately 450-member PLO council to garner the yes votes he needs. Israel has said it will permit 300 members of the council still in exile to enter the Palestinian autonomous area for the vote—and to remain if they want—but several already have refused.

From afar, it might appear as if the best thing for Arafat to do would be to use his newfound status to consolidate his gains—Gaza Strip and about 30 percent of the West Bank—and focus his energies on developing the infrastructure of his nascent country.

But the vast majority of Arafat voters were casting their ballots in favor of a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital. This is what Arafat pledged in his campaign, and the Palestinian people saw Arafat as the leader most able to lead them to this goal.

The point was driven home again on Monday, when PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas, who oversaw the Palestinian election commission, was quoted in Israeli papers as saying that the new, 88-member legislative council elected along with Arafat would declare Palestinian independence during its three-year term.

"The council that was elected has brought us five minutes from independence, and the council will declare independence during its three-year term," Abbas said.

Israeli officials say that independence is something only Israel can grant to the Palestinians and that the size and authority of the Palestinian autonomous area will be determined through negotiations.

Israel also says there is no room for compromise on Jerusalem. The eastern half of Jerusalem and the Old City were captured from Jordan in the 1967 war and will never again be divided, Israel says.

Palestinian leaders allege that it was with an eye toward final negotiations that Israel put thousands of police officers on the street on election day. They charge that the police frightened away potential voters in order to reduce the Palestinians' profile in, and claim on, the city.

When the voter turnout in East Jerusalem proved to be about half that of anywhere else but Hebron—the only West Bank city where Israeli troops remain—Israel's Minister of Internal Security, Moshe Shahal, leaped on the results: "The Arab residents of Jerusalem voted for the unity of Jerusalem and for the status quo in the city."

In his view, that means those who abstained do not want to be citizens of a future Palestinian state. Many Palestinian residents of Jerusalem respond that they did not want to vote "under occupation."

And so the battles go for Arafat. Palestinians want the more than 120,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank to pull up stakes, and the settlers claim it is their birthright, land given to Jews by God. Palestinians demand the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees who went to Lebanon, Syria and Jordan follow Israel's 1948 and 1967 wars; Israel so far says no.

Refugees bring mixed emotions to first Palestinian elections

By Daniel Williams
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JABALIYAH REFUGEE camp, Gaza Strip—because residents in this vast refugee camp feel like losers in the peace process, they brought mixed emotions to their polling places Saturday as they voted in the Palestinians' first national elections.

In conversations with several groups of voters, one theme emerged unanimously: In making peace with Israel, the major compromises were made by the Palestinian refugees—not only those in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, but also those who live in Arab countries and have no voice in the matter. The recognition of Israel by the Palestine Liberation Organization crushed the faint hope for them that some day, people driven from their homes almost 50 years ago—or their descendants—would return to their places of origin.

And they were aware that by voting—even if for a protest candidate—they were accomplices in the deal. Gaining control of sizable portions of Gaza and the West Bank was little comfort to those who, like most of those in this camp, trace their roots to areas inside what is now Israel.

"We are now part of the process—sadly, I would say," said Saeb Samur, a tailor. "We will elect a president who accepted the deal and an assembly that will work with it."

He was referring to Yasser Arafat, the almost-certain winner in the presidential vote, and the 88-seat governing assembly, for which the Gaza Strip will provide 12 members.

Despite such misgivings, Jabaliyah voters seemed to turn out in force. Women in shawls

and long, modest dresses lined up alongside men in cloth headresses. In both cases, this signifies the traditions of a village existence they have long ago abandoned. In some cases, the modesty was driven by Muslim religious conviction.

After voting, the women retired to their homes or stayed in the unseasonable sunshine to watch children at play; the men drank coffee on roadsides. All seemed to be debating whether it was wise to vote, whom they ought to have voted for and why.

"I think basically people voted for candidates they think they can trust, that they know well," said Khaled Abdel-Salam, a day laborer. "That is their protection against the peace negotiations."

Jabaliyah holds a special place in Palestinian nationalist lore. It was here that the infatuation, the revolt against Israeli military occupation, began in 1987. That uprising broke the

impression that the Palestinians were forever resigned to life under Israel's rule.

Residents of Jabaliyah live largely in squalor, and like hundreds of thousands of other Palestinian refugees, they have yet to see much benefit from the peace accord their revolt helped bring about. Most live in cramped, cinder-block primitive housing. Almost no new construction is going on, jobs are scarce, conditions are unhealthy, and at this rainy time of year, streets flood and sewers chronically back up.

This lack of material progress contrasts sharply with the condition of Palestinians whose ancestral homes are in the West Bank and Gaza. These Palestinians have begun to invest and plan for their future, and they more enthusiastically welcome compromise.

So, many Jabaliyah voters, while lamenting the final loss of their home towns or in some

cases dreaming of some millennial change in international relations that would permit them to go back, spoke of the lack of economic well-being.

"We are going along with this peace, and we voted because we need to get someone to put pressure on the government to improve our economy," ventured Jamil Kafarna, 18 and unemployed. "Otherwise, we lose everything."

At a nearby school playground used as a polling place, a group of women struck much the same theme. "We need a state, yes, but we need jobs more," said Ikhtidar Hawal, a university student. "The way things are, there is no chance."

She was referring to the fact that, currently, Gaza is kind of an island. No road connects it to the West Bank; the only exit is through Israel, and the Israeli government blocks it at will. There is no seaport or airport.



A woman casts vote to the Legislative Council

Legislative Council to include Fatah opponents

By Nicholas Goldberg
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Although Yasser Arafat appears to have walked away with an overwhelming 88 percent of the vote in Saturday's Palestinian election for president, returns indicate he may not have a rubber-stamp parliament to work with.

Despite predictions of a clean sweep by Arafat's Fatah party, early returns in the races for the 88-member legislative council indicated that numerous independent and opposition candidates had been elected. Among those who headed for victory were Haidar Abdel Shafi, the popular head of the Red Cross here who broke with Arafat some years ago, and Imad Falouji, an Islamic militant who used to be a leader of the radical Hamas organization.

With vote counting continuing by hand late into the evening Sunday, it also appeared that several outspoken women had been elected—an unusual occurrence in Islamic society—including the prominent academic and human rights activist Hanan Ashrawi.

"The lesson is that people want participatory democracy; they want separation of powers, they do not want another

Arab regime," said Jonathan Kuttub, a council candidate from Jerusalem. "They love Arafat. That's clear. But they don't want Arafat to be a dictator."

Still, despite the victory of some independents, the majority of the seats were believed to have been won by members of the Fatah organization and other adherents of Arafat, who has mobilized his people for three decades as leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Turnout, election officials said, was close to 75 percent of the 1 million-plus eligible voters.

"This is an important indication to Israelis and reassurance to Israel that the Palestinian people want peace," said election coordinator Mahmoud Abbas.

Despite scattered charges of intimidation and electioneering at the polls, and despite several instances of violence on election day, most of the 600 foreign election monitors concluded that the historic vote—it was the first national election in Palestinian history—had been conducted fairly.

Former President Carter, who led a group of election observers from the United States, said he was concerned about the slow pace of vote-counting, about Israeli intimidation in East Jerusalem and



Democratic elections are seen as the first step to statehood

about Palestinian harassment of voters in several districts. But ultimately, he gave his blessing.

"In general, the bottom line is there was nothing that took place yesterday that subverted the basic principle that the will of the Palestinian people be expressed," Carter said at a news conference in East Jerusalem on Sunday evening.

Carter and others urged Arafat to take advantage of the strong beginning to turn the embryonic Palestinian entity—it has not yet been determined whether it will ever reach full-fledged statehood—into a true democracy, rather than an authoritarian regime like most of its Arab neighbors. During the two years he has had limited rule over the city of Jericho and the Gaza Strip, Arafat's government has been repeatedly criticized by human rights monitors for violating civil liberties through intimidation, unlawful arrests and the muzzling of political opponents.

As election results began trickling in, international reaction was mixed. Egyptian and Jordanian leaders congratulated Arafat. Radical Arab

Palestinians elect Arafat as first president

By Nicholas Goldberg
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

HEBRON, West Bank—Despite threats of violence, charges of corruption and a boycott by the opposition, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians went to the polls Saturday and elected Yasser Arafat as their first president.

Many first-time voters waited in lines excitedly, saying they were proud, finally, to have the opportunity—after centuries of foreign domination—to select their own leaders in their first national election ever.

"I am ill, but I came to vote anyway," said Amina Ismail Abu Mershed, a 90-year-old woman from the West Bank village of Halhoul, near Hebron, who arrived with her daughter and granddaughter.

"This is the first time I have ever voted and I'm very happy," Arafat voted near his home in Gaza City, dropping two ballots—white for members of an 88-member Palestinian legislative council and red for president—into separate boxes.

"This is a new era," he said after voting. "It is the first legislative and presidential elections for the Palestinian people. This is the foundation for our Palestinian state."

Arafat was listed on the ballot under both his full name—Mohammed Yasser Arafat—and his long-time nom-de-guerre, Abu Ammar.

Several hours before the polls closed, election officials estimated that between 60 and 70 percent of the 1 million registered voters had turned out.

The day was not all upbeat. In the West Bank city of Jenin, where three militant Islamic activists were shot and killed by Israeli soldiers on Friday, thousands marched in a funeral procession, chanting: "We will blow up Tel Aviv." Islamic groups had called for a boycott of the elections.

In the disputed city of East Jerusalem—which Israelis claim as their own and where Palestinians were allowed to vote only by "absentee ballot" at post offices—4,000 Israeli soldiers and police were deployed, perched on rooftops and through the streets. The security was so heavy that many Palestinians said they were scared to vote. Only 30 percent had turned out.

The council vote and the position of president form part of the recent peace agreements that gave limited self-rule to Palestinians on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres congratulated Arafat in a phone call.

groups, including the Islamic militant organization Hamas, dismissed Arafat's victory quickly, noting that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians did not participate—either because they boycotted the elections or because they were not in the country. Millions of Palestinians still live in refugee camps elsewhere in the Arab world.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said that the election could also be read as a successful referendum on the peace process so far. But the right-of-center Jerusalem Post said the world had most likely witnessed "the birth of the 23rd Arab police state."

Controversy in Israel began immediately over the clauses in the PLO charter calling for the destruction of Israel. In the peace agreements with Israel, the Palestinians have promised to cancel the clauses within two months of convening the new council.

It is not clear, however, whether Arafat has the will, or the support, to cancel the clauses, which many Israelis hold out as proof that he does not really want peace in the long run.

Peres said this week that members of the Palestine National Council, the PLO governing body, would be allowed back into Palestinian-ruled areas in the West Bank and Gaza to amend the charter. That group includes such long-exiled guerrilla leaders as George Habash and Abu Abbas, who are responsible for some of the worst terrorist attacks in recent history.



Ashrawi in a post office in East Jerusalem



Casting the vote in Hebron



Feisal Hussein pops it in!



Election note

■ Voter turnout in the elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council was 64 percent in the West Bank and Gaza. The highest turnout however, was in Jericho, registering as high as 80 per cent. Next came Gaza, the headquarters of the Palestine National Authority. Voter turnout was 70 per cent. In Qalqilya it was (65%), Ramallah (65%), Safet and Toubas (70%), Nablus (70%), Tulkarem (65%), and Jenin (50%). Surrounding villages registered a voter turnout of 60%. Around 672,762 people had the right to vote in the West Bank and Jerusalem alone. Of these, 460,541 voted, 68.46% of the total.

■ More than 650 official international observers were invited to monitor the international elections. This included the former US president Jimmy Carter, Jordan's former prime minister Abdul Salam Al Majali and Prince Hashem, a close relative of King Hassan of Morocco. About 1000 non-official international observers were also invited.

■ Dr Hanan Ashrawi, former spokesman of the Palestinian delegation to the peace process won a seat on the Legislative Council for the Jerusalem constituency. She is an English professor at Beit Zeit University and a founder of the Palestinian Citizen Rights Authority. Dr Ashrawi said she intends to use her seat in the council to speak out on anything that requires courageous intervention. "It will be difficult to marginalize the real independents," she said. Dr Haider Abdel Shafi, the head of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid peace talks also won a seat. Dr Shafi received the highest number of votes in the Gaza constituency. Dr Nabil Shaath, currently a planning minister in the Palestinian National Authority who long advocated negotiations with Israel, was also among those who were elected. Mr Abdel Jawad Salah, a former exiled Palestinian who was allowed to return by Israel last year was elected in the Ramallah constituency. Mr Salah, a veteran nationalist who was expelled to Jordan in 1974, said he would criticize the Palestine National Authority if it continued to violate the rights of journalists. "This would be a crime against human rights," he said. Dr Saeb Uriqat won in the Jenin constituency. Marwan Kanfani, spokesman for Yasser Arafat, was also elected.

■ Over 670 candidates fought for 81-council seats. Fatah won 59 seats, 15 of which went to independents and only three in other minor parties. Needless to say, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas, officially boycotted the elections. However, Hamas had promised that it would not interfere with election procedures.

■ Mr Arafat received congratulations from all over the world. One of the first leaders to congratulate him was the French President Mr Jacques Chirac. "Through you, the Palestinian people have clearly chosen peace, stability and economic development in the Middle East," he said in a telegram. The President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandela, phoned Mr Arafat after the election results were declared. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Abdullah also sent messages of support. Congratulations also came from the leaders of Spain, Germany, Austria and China, and the President of the European Commission, Mr Jacques Santer. The German Foreign Minister Mr Klaus Kinkel said that this was an "impressive election victory" and congratulated the Palestinian people for a "clear endorsement of autonomy and the peace process." British Foreign Secretary Mr Malcolm Rifkind called the elections a "historic day," and a turning point for Palestinian democracy.

Palestinians give Arafat a thundering majority

By Marjorie Miller and Mary Curtin
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JERUSALEM—In a peaceful display of national pride, Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank turned out in large numbers on Saturday to vote in their first election for a self-rule government. But fear and anger kept many from polls that were under guard of Israeli soldiers in the contested cities of Jerusalem and Hebron.

Returns—read over the Voice of Palestine radio even as some polls remained open extra hours for last-minute voters—showed Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat winning the presidential vote by a massive 88.1 percent.

Arafat's greatest victory, however, was not his apparent landslide but the large turnout of voters, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where his self-rule government has been running affairs for nearly two years.

Despite calls for a boycott by Islamic groups and secular opposition parties, and their refusal to field candidates, Palestinians of all political persuasions chose to cast their ballots. The high turnout after only two weeks of campaigning seemed certain to legitimize Arafat's policy of negotiating Palestinian statehood in stages with Israel.

"It is a great feeling to participate in elections, and I hope they will lead us to a Palestinian state," said Nawal Asmar, 36, who voted at a nursery school in the West Bank village of El Ram.

Following the vote, the Israeli government announced that it would allow exiled members of the Palestinian National Council—the Palestine Liberation Organization's legislature—to enter autonomous areas to vote on Arafat's promise to eliminate articles in the Palestinian charter that call for the destruction of Israel.

Under the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, Arafat agreed to have the articles amended within two months of the elections. Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said he would stop the peace process if this was not done.

Most members of the council who are still in exile, however, are opponents of the peace accord, and it is not clear that Arafat can garner the two-thirds majority he needs to amend the PLO's charter. His hope is that they will change their minds about the peace process once they return to Palestinian-ruled areas and talk with the kind of average Palestinians who turned out to vote.

The voting for president of the ruling Palestinian Authority and an 88-seat legislative council generally went smoothly, and the election took place without major outbreaks of violence under the watch of hundreds of international observers.

However, international and Israeli observer groups complained about police interference—including some reports that officers were photographing voters—in Jerusalem, the most sensitive polling spot for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The election day mood was



Arafat: "the beginning of a new era"



Samiha Khalil received only 10 percent of the vote

festive in Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jericho and other towns under Palestinian control, where the Palestinian Central Election Commission said 65 percent to 85 percent of registered voters had cast their ballots into red and white padlocked boxes.

But East Jerusalem, home to most of the capital's Palestinian residents, looked like an armed camp around post offices, where Israel had insisted that Palestinian residents vote as if by absentee ballot. Several thousand Israeli police and border guards manned barricades there with batons and Galil rifles, scuffling repeatedly with irate Palestinians.

Israeli officials said the 4,000-member security force was meant to prevent clashes between Palestinians and right-wing Jews who did not want them to vote in the capital they claim is Israel's alone.

Former US President Carter and other election observers accused the Israelis of using the deliberate show of force to keep East Jerusalemites away from the polls.

"I don't think there is anything they are doing everything they can to intimidate the voter," Carter said. "I have no doubt that the aim is to reduce the size of the vote in East Jerusalem."

Under the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, the two sides are to enter into

negotiations over Jerusalem and other outstanding issues in the final phase of peace talks set to begin in May. Palestinians want Arab East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian state. They claim that Israel wanted a small voter turnout to weaken the Palestinian claim to Jerusalem in future negotiations.

After the Jewish Sabbath ended Saturday night, several thousand religious Jews and members of Israel's right-wing opposition demonstrated in Jerusalem's Zion Square under a banner reading "All Hands in Defense of Jerusalem." There were no reports of violence there, although the demonstrators burned a Palestinian flag. Cast-

ing his ballot in Gaza City on Saturday, Arafat called the election the beginning of "a new era."

"It is the first legislative and presidential elections for the Palestinian people. This is the foundation for our Palestinian state," Arafat said.

Arafat, who forged the peace agreement with then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, defeated his only challenger in the presidential race, 72-year-old Samiha Khalil, a grandmother and socialist activist from Ramallah.

Returns from several cities and villages showed Arafat winning with about 95 percent of the vote. ■

PNA elections seen as a first step toward statehood

By Marjorie Miller
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JERUSALEM—The term never appears on the ballot, of course, but when Palestinians went to the polls for the first time Saturday, they will be casting their votes in favor of a Palestinian state.

Not only do all 674 candidates running for public office support the goal, but in the very act of electing their own government, Palestinians are taking a first step toward building a sovereign state.

The election lacks many of the trimmings of democracy and drama of a Western-style political race.

The two-week campaign was short on rules of fair play, such as equal access to the media and freedom of the press.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is virtually assured vic-

tory in the vote for president of the Palestinian self-rule area, and most of the candidates running for the 88-member legislative council come from his political movement.

But in the end, most Palestinians seem to be taking the longview. They want to vote and to have their own elected leaders after a 28-year Israeli occupation and, before that, decades of foreign rule.

"This process is far more important than who wins," said Anis Qaq, a candidate for a council seat from East Jerusalem. "Choosing the representatives of the people is partially achieving the right to self-determination." We are in a transition from a revolutionary movement to a pre-state to a state.

While not entirely democratic, the campaign served to focus Palestinians' attention on issues of democracy. The candidates' rhetoric went beyond that of the decades-long libera-

tion movement—of heroes and martyrs in the battle for an independent Palestine—to the problems of Palestinian nation-building.

Many of the more than 1 million Palestinians who registered to vote attended campaign get-togethers throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and, for the first time, enthusiastically grilled their prospective leaders on such issues as health care, education, public works and a state of law.

Apparently most registered voters were not planning to heed the call of radical Islamic groups and secular leftists to boycott the elections.

Despite threats of violence from Islamic radicals and Jewish settlers in the West Bank who also oppose the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement, pollsters have predicted about 75 percent of those who registered will turn out to cast their ballots.

It was unclear whether the fatal shooting of three Palestinians by Israeli soldiers outside of the West Bank town of Janin on Friday would affect that turnout.

The Israeli army said that the Palestinians fired while trying to run a roadblock and that Israelis responded.

Palestinian officials said the shooting victims were activists from the Islamic group Hamas, which opposes the election and is feared to be planning a revenge attack against Israel for the killing of Yehiya Aysah.

The election is the result of the 1993 agreement between Arafat and then-Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and it is, in effect, a referendum on the accord.

Palestinians who participate in the vote are accepting the peace process that has granted them autonomy in exchange for putting down their weapons and rocks against Israel.

This is also one of the key points for Israelis, who seek assurances in the election that the Palestinian people are behind the accords that Arafat has signed in their name.

Only one candidate campaigned against Arafat's peace process, and she was also the only candidate to challenge Arafat directly to the race for president of the Palestinian Authority. Samiha Khalil, a 72-year-old political activist from Ramallah, charged that Arafat had settled for too little in the self-rule accord and promised to abolish it if elected.

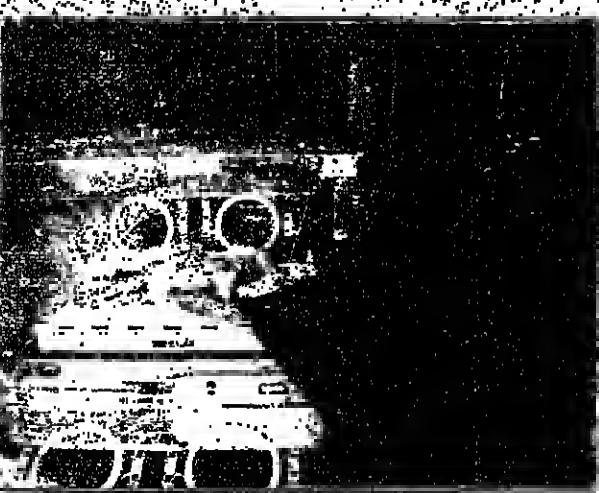
Her line may have been popular among nonvoters from Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—groups that oppose the peace accord because it did not immediately establish a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and that still aim for

the destruction of Israel.

Pollsters estimate that Arafat will win the election with between 65 percent and 80 percent of the vote. This would be an important stamp of approval for a man who, through his strategic alliance with the Jewish state, has alienated or abandoned much of his old political base among Palestinian exiles and other more radical sectors of his Palestine Liberation Organization.

As the elected leader, Arafat will be strengthened against his anti-peace opposition at home and, externally, in "final status" negotiations with Israel over the most difficult issues: control of Jerusalem and the size and character of the Palestinian entity.

Israel opposes the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state and wants it to remain an autonomous area or part of a Jordanian federation. ■



The UN boycott is affecting children the most in Iraq

Iraq tells UN it's willing to sell oil

By John M. Goshko
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

UNITED NATIONS—Iraq informed the United Nations Friday night that it is willing to begin negotiations toward selling limited amounts of oil to get humanitarian supplies for its suffering people.

A message from Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq al-Aisawi to Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Iraq would begin discussions in effecting an oil sale under the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 986, which is designed to provide limited relief from the sanctions that have crippled Iraq since the 1991 Persian Gulf war.

UN spokeswoman Sylvana Foa said Boutros-Ghali had accepted the offer in New York as soon as possible. She added that no date had been set, and there was no immediate information about who would represent Iraq.

A letter increased speculation that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government might be retreating from a long refusal to accept the Security Council's conditions for a limited oil deal. Earlier this week, Nazaf Hamdoun, UN ambassador, told non-aligned council members Baghdad was ready to discuss the oil sales, without conditions.

There has been under severe financial and trade sanctions since it invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and triggered the international crisis that resulted a few months later in its forcible expulsion from Kuwait by the United States-led coalition military operation. The sanctions, aimed at forcing Saddam to dismantle his program to develop weapons of mass destruction and meet other security demands, have led to hunger and illness in Iraq. The UN has the opportunity to sell some oil under strict conditions to earn foreign exchange for purchase of medicines. The council's offer was updated a month ago in Resolution 986, which would permit Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil over six months.

Now, Iraq has rejected such offers as a violation of its sovereignty. The questions now are whether the UN is willing to be flexible or whether the Iraqis are willing to use the talks in an attempt to renegotiate the terms of Resolution 986. ■

Palestinian play parodies candidates, family life

Abu Safwan is only a fictional onstage character, but he had theater audiences roaring with laughter and recognition in a sold-out run that coincided with this month's real election campaign.

By Barton Gellman
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

RAMALLAH, West Bank—Abu Safwan, the big man of a big clan, is the candidate of "peace, Islam, left, right and communism" in Saturday's election for Palestinian parliament. He has promised "a sheep and cow for every villager" and vowed to repair "the infrastructure, the overstructure, the understructure and the outerstructure."

Where tribes and empty rhetoric did not win a vote, he sent thugs to beat his rivals and planted rumors that they were foreign agents. Seizing upon the slogan of equality, he promoted his subservient wife to public partner—but interrupted himself to bid her fetch him tea.

Abu Safwan is only a fictional onstage character, but he had theater audiences roaring with laughter and recognition in a sold-out run that coincided with this month's real election campaign. Night after night, audiences have packed the unbeaten Siraj Theater here and roared their approval of a performance that spares few icons of Palestinian life.

As voters choose a president and an 88-member Palestinian Council, the play, "Democracy by Force," provides a window into the rapidly changing political culture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The emerging Palestinian state is eager for democracy but anxious that its fruits may be snatched away, irreverent enough to laugh at authority but conscious that license to do so goes only so far.

"There are real figures like Abu Safwan, and we know them," said Zuhair Nobani, 45, the Jordanian-born Palestinian actor who plays the lead role. "There are some candidates who should see this play."

But not, the cast hastens to add, the man who is candidate number one. Yasser Arafat, who is assured of victory in the race for presi-

dent, enjoys an immunity born of fear from open mockery in a Palestinian newspaper or play.

"I think it would cross the red line to make Abu Ammar look like Abu Safwan," acknowledged supporting actor Housam Abu Ashee, 37, using Arafat's nickname.

But if Arafat is untouchable, the play does poke fun at those around him.

As Abu Safwan's campaign takes off on stage, his cohort aides begin taking on props and mannerisms that strongly resemble those of Arafat's personal protective force. They don sunglasses, pack cellular phones and begio walking backward through crowds, eyes scanning under chairs for would-be assassins. The audience smiles knowingly, but nothing explicit is said.

The script, by playwright Mahmoud Shauqat, is above all subversive. Wickedly funny, it lampoons not only the candidates but every pillar of the Palestinian establishment and some of the most powerful symbols of nationalism.

The black, white, red and green Palestinian flag, for instance, is not usually something trifled with in a society that has seen many young men arrested and killed by Israel's occupation troops in clashes provoked by the flag's display. But Abu Safwan wears it as a necktie, and in the opening scene he frowns at a flag



Zuhair Nobani

and asks, "A 150 shekels for this?"

More revolutionary, perhaps, is the play's assault on the traditional power structure of the Palestinian family, in which husband and father rule. Much of the play's hilarity, to judge by audience response, comes from Abu Safwan's losing struggle to contain the generational and sexual rebellion in his home.

Safwan, the candidate's oldest son, mutinies against his father because he regards him as outmoded and corrupt. And Abu Safwan's obedient wife, who covers herself in scarf and robe and flinches before the candidate's every whim, is radicalized by the democratic campaign and leaves him when she discovers that he has exercised his Islamic right to marry a second wife. By the end of the play she is wearing Western clothes to go with her modern views.

"This woman is simple but not dumb," said Samira Natur, 35, who plays the part of Safwan's wife. "When her son and his girlfriend speak of progressive ideas, she can understand them and is open to them."

Ismael Dabbagh, 26, plays the rebellious son and regards him as "the Antigone of Abu Safwan. He and his girlfriend had a big role in the intifada, and because of that they won't permit Abu Safwan to get into the parliament by buying votes and by force."

"This play is very daring compared to what is seen (elsewhere) in the Arab world," he said. The campaign is the central theme in "Democracy by Force," whatever its social message. And the campaign it portrays is a

sorry chronicle indeed.

When asked about "242," which every Palestinian knows is the bedrock UN Security Council resolution on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Abu Safwan thinks it is an arithmetic problem. He garbles the names of world leaders and believes Kurt Waldheim is still UN secretary general. He is so frightened of public speaking that he hurls out "my honored settlers" to start his first campaign rally.

Abu Safwan makes up for these deficits by pressing wads of cash into potential supporters' hands and paying \$900 for a front-page newspaper photograph. He flings out promises such as: "a comfortable car for every family!" and invites hundreds of people to dine on eggplant and lamb.

When he hears that a neighbor has made fun of him, he vows to "make him bark like a dog before he'll speak like that again."

Jabber, his chief enforcer, assures him that he has already beaten the offender into submission. Abu Safwan eventually spends over half a million shekels—early \$200,000—in an ever more lavish effort to buy the vote.

"Don't worry," says Raafat, his campaign manager, alluding to the corrupt opportunities of power. "For every penny you spend now, you'll get back 50 when you're in the council." Abu Ashee, who plays Jabber, said "reality is even more miserable than what you see on stage."

Mary Hajel of Ramallah, still laughing after the play, said "if this wasn't reality, people wouldn't have reacted the way you saw."

The script leaves it ambiguous whether Abu Safwan will win a seat in the end. But Najeh Abu Shamis, who plays one of the candidate's tuggish aides, says he personally has no doubt at all.

"Yes, sure he wins," the actor said. "We expect to have a lot of Abu Safwans in the parliament." ■

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Cinema

"AN AWFULLY BIG ADVENTURE" (New Line, R). Hugh Grant has a now-uncharacteristic role — as a fellow who's not quite as charming as the actor's "Four Weddings and a Funeral" alter ego — in this comedy from the same director, Mike Newell. It's about a young woman's (Georgina Cates) initiation into the theater world, which reveals some definite warts; Alan Rickman ("Die Hard") also stars. *** (R: AS, P)

"BLACK BELT ANGELS" (Monarch, R). In the tradition of the "3 Ninjas" movies — but with a definite gender reversal — this family-oriented action-comedy focuses on four young women who use their abilities in both figurative and literal battles to save their father, as well as the martial-arts school where they learned their prowess. Bobby Kim, a master of the technique, is in the film's cast. ** (Not rated: V)

HELD OVER: "FIRST KNIGHT" (Columbia/TriStar, R). The legend of Camelot gets a retelling in director Jerry Zucker's ("Ghost") version, with Sean Connery as King Arthur and Richard Gere as Lancelot ... still competing for the love of Guinevere (Julia Ormond, also in the new remake of "Sabrina"). The script by playwright William Nicholson ("Shadowlands") puts some new twists in the familiar saga. ** (PG-13: AS, P, V)

"THE ENGLISHMAN WHO WENT UP A HILL BUT CAME DOWN A MOUNTAIN" (Miramax, R). In writer-director Christopher Monger's gentle comedy, Hugh Grant stars as a cartographer who surveys a town's landmark, since the residents want it certified as a piece of history. However, the hill in question turns out to be too short to qualify ... so he tries to help the locals increase its height. Tara Fitzgerald, who appeared with Grant in "Sirens," also stars. *** (PG: AS, P)

"AMATEUR" (Columbia/TriStar, R). A film-festival favorite, the latest movie from writer-director Hal Hartley ("Simple Men," "Trust") constructs an unlikely love triangle from three vastly different participants. Elina Lowensohn ("Schindler's List") won particular praise from critics; Isabelle Huppert, Hartley-regular Martin Donovan and Parker Posey ("Party Girl") also are featured. *** (R: AS, P, V)

COMING SOON: "THE NET" (Columbia/TriStar, Jan. 9): Sandra Bullock plays an expert computer hacker drawn into danger by a mysterious stranger (Jeremy Northam). (PG-13)

"THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD" (Columbia/TriStar, Jan. 16): A youngster's toys come to life magically in the title cupboard in this fantasy-adventure. (PG)

"LORD OF ILLUSIONS" (MGM/UA, Jan. 16): Scott Bakula plays a detective investigating a magician in Clive Barker's horror-fantasy. (R and unrated versions)

FAMILY-VIEWING GUIDE KEY: AS, adult situations; N, nudity; P, profanity; V, violence; GV, particularly graphic violence.

ENGLISH PROGRAM

SATURDAY

2:00—Moomins
2:30—Wish Kid
3:00—Harry And The Hendersons
3:25—Blue Heelers
4:00—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Major Dad
8:00—The Stamp of Greatness
8:25—Hawaii Five-O
9:00—The Glass Virgin
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Feature Film
11:50—Mancuso FBI

SUNDAY

2:00—The Flintstones
2:30—Droopy Master Detective
3:00—Family Playhouse
3:10—Mac And Muttley
3:30—Pugwall's Summer
4:00—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Are You Being Served
8:00—Cinema, Cinema
8:25—Hawaii Five-O
9:10—Women of the World
9:35—Heart Beat
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Counterstrike
11:15—The American Chart Show
12:00—Stay Lucky

MONDAY

2:00—Bonkers
2:30—Richie Rich
3:00—Playabout
3:15—Bustin Loose
3:40—Animals of the Mediterranean
4:00—Voyagers

5:00—French Programs

7:30—News Headlines
7:35—McHale's Navy
8:00—Inventions
8:25—Hawaii Five-O
9:10—Russia: The Missing Years
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Perfect Scoundrels
11:10—Taurus Rising
12:00—Ellen

TUESDAY

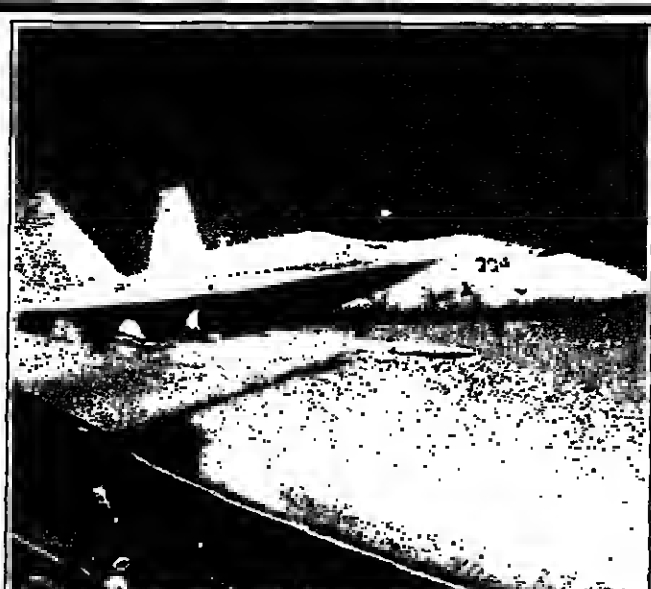
2:00—Captain Planet
2:30—Jonny Quest
2:50—Spirit of Adventure
3:40—Scientific Eye
4:30—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—You Bet Your Life
8:00—Clive Anderson
8:25—Hawaii Five-O
9:10—99-1 (Police Drama)
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—I'll take Manhattan
11:15—Feature Film

WEDNESDAY

2:00—The Flintstones
2:30—Speed Racer
3:00—Bill Nye the Science Guy
3:30—Amazing Stories
4:00—Voyagers
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Anything for a Laugh
8:00—The Nature of Things
8:25—Hawaii Five-O
9:10—Horizon/Poetal Attraction
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Prison
10:45—Airwolf
11:20—The Silk Road
12:30—Second Thoughts

THURSDAY

1:00—Fireman Sam



Super Carrier (Adventure Drama), Friday at 2:35

1:15—The Legends Of Treasure Island
1:45—My Secret Identity
2:02—NBA
3:05—The new leave it to Beaver
3:30—Adventures Of The Old West
4:30—Gillette World Sport
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Carol And Company
8:00—Magazine 01
8:15—The Album Show
9:10—Miami Vice
10:00—News At Ten
10:25—Feature Film
12:00—Matlock

FRIDAY

1:00—The Little Mermaid
1:30—Iris the happy professor
1:40—Bush School
2:00—See How They Grow



Super Carrier (Adventure Drama), Friday at 2:35

2:15—Lift Off
2:35—Super Carrier
3:20—Goldrush in Alaska
4:05—Wonder Why
4:30—Give Us a Clue
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Short Story Cinema
8:00—Sea Quest
8:45—America's Funniest People
9:10—Widows
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Second Chances
11:30—Feature Film

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

SAMEDI

5:00—Dessin animé Ordy
5:15—Dessin animé Cupido

5:30—Série

Les compagnons de l'aventure
Les ouachas vol à voile
Chateau Vallon
Le journal
Magazine
Fant pas rêver

DIMANCHE

5:00—Dessin animé Ordy
5:15—Dessin animé Cupido
5:30—Série
Les compagnons de l'aventure
Les mégazèbres et la valise
Magazine
Envoyé spécial
Le prix du soleil
Chasseurs de trésor
Le journal
Sports et musique

LUNDI

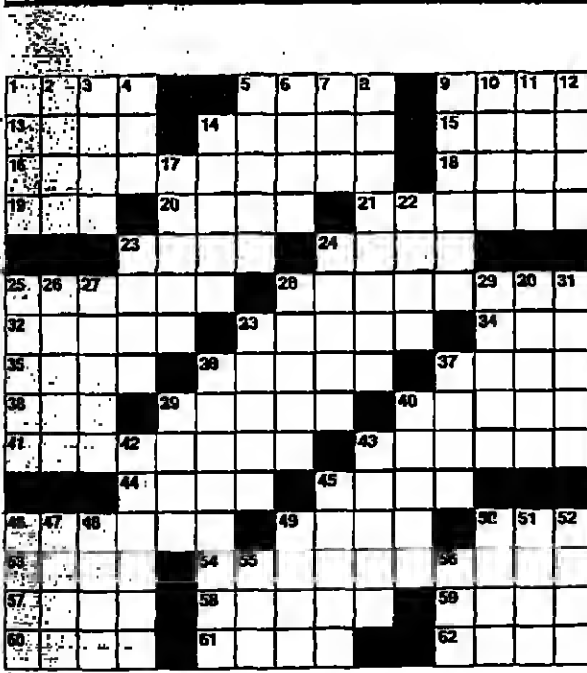
5:00—Dessin animé Ordy
5:15—Dessin animé Cupido
5:30—Série
Les compagnons de l'aventure
Les mégazèbres dans la bonne pioche
C'est pas sorcier
Une journée à la ferme
L'école des fans
Frédéric François
Le journal
Magazine
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI

5:00—Dessin animé Ordy
5:15—Dessin animé Cupido

Programs are subject to change by JTV

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS
1. Map of a place of land
9. Identical
13. Redolence
14. Clear line
15. Arabian potentate
16. Five-sided polygon
17. Conspire
18. U.S. sub.
20. Uge
21. Rich for
22. Salad cook
23. Author James
25. Stilted
26. Organized
32. Wide
33. Author of "Love Story"
34. Tuleary
35. Roman god
36. Public discussion group

DOWN
2. Hero's seven
39. Weird
40. Rings out
41. Toothless, as some animals
43. Makes one appear guilty
44. Jug handles
45. Place for coins
46. Picks up the tab
47. Wound with a dagger
49. Conservation monogram
53. Hirsute
54. Decorative
57. Farm unit
58. Evict
60. At no time, to poets
61. Kitchen ending

ACROSS
37. Utah flower
38. Hero's seven
39. Weird
40. Rings out
41. Toothless, as some animals
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—THIS WEEK'S— HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tips: The moon is in technical Aquarius. That's excellent for puzzles, assembling toys, or learning a new computer game.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Spend time with as many people as possible. You'll be in the mood to party! You may remember chores still to be done. Don't feel guilty, get busy!

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Take it easy. You'll be in a festive mood. Schedule group activities.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). You'll be lucky, especially when it comes to meeting with new friends. True love could even be among your gifts.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). You could make a few bucks. It looks like you'll be lucky financially. You're lucky emotionally, too, so plan something romantic.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Giving may be more fun than receiving, especially concerning somebody you love. Devote some time to solving a financial problem.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're having lots of fun, but it could also be a lot of work for you! Get a friend to help you with the cleanup.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Love dominates your agenda. A starry-eyed conversation could lead to long-term bliss. Don't complain.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Home's where the heart is. You may not get everything you want, but you might get something you didn't expect!

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A technical toy should be lots of fun. You'll figure out how it works in no time!

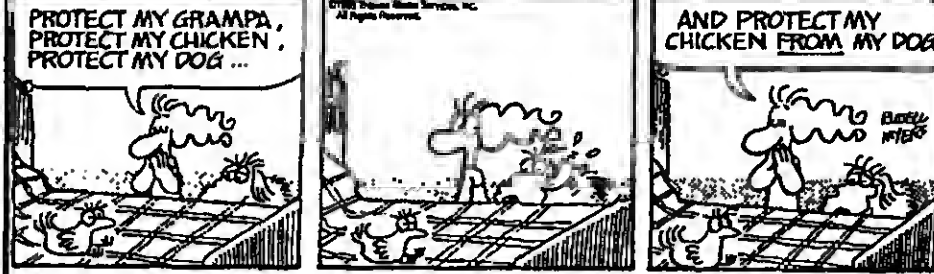
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're very powerful. You may be a bit astonished at expenses, though. You should have thought of a way to meet those costs.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You're in fine form. That's good, because there's lots to be done! Use your imagination to solve an unexpected problem.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). You may wake up worried that you've forgotten something. You're very lucky and very popular too!

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: You learn best by doing. Study with an expert to gain valuable experience, and prosper.

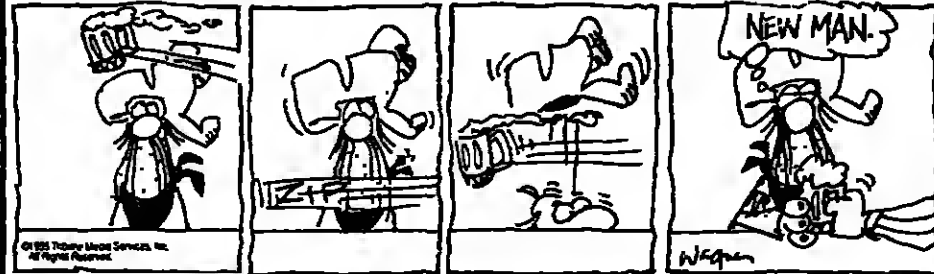
PERKY & BEANZ by Russell Myers



ELWOOD by Ben Templeton & Tom Forman



CATFISH by Fred Wagner & Tom Cone



Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

PAKKO
ROIVS
GROHPE
RUTIVE

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoons.

ANSWERS: KAPOK VISOR GOPHER VIRTUE

Words of Wisdom

Speaking from experience may be laudable, but it isn't always the smartest thing to do.

...
 Habits, good and bad, are rooted in daily practice.

...
 When you stop reaching, you stop growing.

...
 Losing your head makes it hard to save face.

...
 Opportunity: what you wished you had after you've rejected it.

...
 The right road is usually the hardest.

Bridge

Follow Directions By Tannah Hirsch

Both vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH

AK7
Q853
AJ75
Q7

EAST

10843
62
10643
853

SOUTH

Q952
7
KQ82
A1094

WEST

J6
AKJ1094
9
KJ62

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	2♥	Dbl
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: King of ♥

When you make a descriptive bid, there's a price to pay. If the opponents buy the hand, your action can provide a blueprint of the distribution that enables declarer to get home.

Outside of West's two-heart opening, which systematically showed at least five hearts and four clubs — in our opinion, a convention of dubious merit — there's not much about the auction that thrills us. With two plus defensive tricks, four spades and a singleton, we would have opened the South hand. And the North hand is better suited to a two-no-trump overcall than a takeout double, despite the club shortness.

West led the king of hearts, then shifted to a diamond. With 10 of West's cards known to declarer, it was as if the hand was being played with glass cards.

The second trick was won in the closed hand and a low club was led toward the queen. West grabbed the king and exited safely with a club to the queen and, when West followed to two rounds of trumps, at least 12 of West's cards were known. Declarer didn't give a hoot what the 13th card was. South simply led another spade and confidently finessed the nine.

When that held, declarer could claim the contract, but the game would have been safe even if West held the ten of trumps. On winning the trump trick West would have been endplayed. A club would be into declarer's A 10 tenace, and a heart would set up dummy's queen while there were still diamond entries to the table.

WORD WISE

Q: Is there a word for people who don't believe in conventional medicine or doctors?

A: Indeed there is, and the word is "iatrapistia." The Greek word for healer was iatros, and it still appears in medical terms such as pediatrician and geriatrics.

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Ouverture diplomatique entre Israël et la Tunisie

La Tunisie et Israël ont pris la décision d'ouvrir respectivement dans chaque pays une section d'intérêts, qui représente une des plus faibles formes de représentation diplomatique.

Au cours d'une conférence de presse réunissant le ministre israélien des affaires étrangères Ehud Barak (à droite sur notre photo) et son homologue tunisien Habib Ben Yahia, le secrétaire d'Etat américain Warren Christopher s'est félicité de ces premiers liens, annonçant qu'ils seront effectifs à partir du 15 avril.

Il a ajouté que cette initiative représentait pour lui «une étape importante pour élargir la zone de paix au Moyen-Orient».

Israël espère désormais signer un tel accord avec la Mauritanie d'ici peu de temps, et peut-être ensuite avec le sultanat d'Oman.

Mardi, la Libye a vivement critiqué la position tunisienne, la jugeant contraire à la volonté des pays arabes.



Religion

Un mois à l'heure du ramadan

Depuis dimanche, la Jordanie vit au rythme du ramadan. Un devoir religieux qui entraîne depuis de nombreuses années un certain nombre de coutumes et de traditions chez les musulmans. Récit d'une journée traditionnelle.

Samedi dernier, à la vue du premier croissant de la lune nouvelle, le ramadan a commencé. Ravis par la venue du neuvième mois de l'année lunaire, les musulmans se sont préparés à être totalement dévoués envers Dieu. Ils adoptent le comportement moral de l'islam avec toutes les obligations qu'il engendre: le jeûne, la prière continue, le jour et la nuit ainsi que l'arrêt de la consommation de nourriture et de boissons.

L'ambiance de ce mois religieux enveloppe la vie ainsi que les cœurs. Etant un des cinq piliers de l'islam, le jeûne

est bien observé dans les pays musulmans.

Il implique que le musulman s'abstienne de manger et de boire du lever du soleil jusqu'au coucher, vers cinq heures en ce moment. Dieu oblige les musulmans à jeûner pour leur faire connaître les difficultés que subissent les pauvres pour survivre. Il le fait aussi dans le but de placer les musulmans riches et pauvres dans les mêmes conditions pour montrer que tous les musulmans sont égaux.

Les coutumes du ramadan se ressemblent presque dans tous les pays musulmans. En Jordanie, les habitudes sont dans toutes les familles les mêmes.

Réunis en famille, les musulmans guettent le «Madfa'a», le coup de canon, pour passer à table après le coucher du soleil et déguster l'iftar, le premier repas de la journée.

A l'appel du «Muathen», celui qui appelle à la prière, on lit «Al Fataha», le premier verset du Coran, pour commencer le repas. Puis suit la prière de l'iftar par laquelle les musulmans renouvellent leur volonté de jeûner encore le lendemain et leur foi en Dieu.

Le repas commence par une date comme faisait le prophète Mahomet. Auparavant, les gens avaient l'habitude de manger seulement la date et allaient à la mosquée pour prier. Ils revenaient ensuite pour manger le repas du ramadan en famille. De nos jours, il n'y a presque que les personnes âgées qui continuent à le faire.

Le repas commence par une soupe accompagnée de pain et de plats qui ouvrent l'appétit comme le «Humous», le «Foules», le «Mutabale», des salades et des cornichons.

La boisson courante de l'iftar est le «Kamar el din», à base d'abricots secs. Devant ces plats variés, la famille discute des enfants puis aborde la vie des parents ou des grands parents.

Le ramadan est considéré comme le mois permettant de resserrer les liens familiaux et les relations avec les proches, les invités étant toujours bien-vus à la table de l'iftar.

Le «souhour» avant le soleil

Le plat principal de l'iftar varie en fonction de la spécialité de la mère de famille parce qu'elle sait bien ce qu'attendent ses enfants gourmands après une longue journée de jeûne. Mettre et enlever le couvert est un travail auquel tous les membres de la famille participent en discutant.

Après l'iftar, les hommes et les femmes vont à la mosquée. Désormais, ils ne s'y rendent que certains jours et non pas chaque soir comme auparavant, à cause des distractions modernes telles que la télévision.

La prière du soir commence par l'«Isha», la cinquième prière de la journée, et est suivie par «Al travelh» qui se divise en cinq séries de quatre inclinaisons entrecoupées par des lectures de sourates du Coran.

Après cette dernière prière, les enfants, jadis, se pressaient pour accueillir les parents en portant des lanternes pour aller se balader dans les rues de la ville et acheter des noix, des bonbons et du chocolat. A présent, on se contente de manger le «Kataief», un gâteau spécial du ramadan frotté avec du fromage de Naplouse,



Le «Kataief», fourré ou fromage ou aux noix, est l'une des spécialités que l'on consomme lors de l'iftar.

soit avec des noix.

L'ambiance des soirées de ramadan dans les cafés est très spéciale. Les jeunes rient, écoutent de la musique arabe jouée par des «Oudés», des instruments à cordes, et fument le «Nargileh».

Ces soirées continuent jusqu'au moment du «Souhour», le deuxième repas de la journée que l'on prend avant le lever du soleil, pour préparer le jeûne du lendemain.

Oroub El Abed

Le calendrier lunaire

Le mois du ramadan, comme les autres fêtes religieuses, se présente toujours à date fixe, mais selon le calendrier musulman basé sur l'année lunaire de 354 jours (ou de 355 quand l'année débute un jour avant la nouvelle lune), le mois lunaire comprenant 28 jours.

Ainsi, il y a, chaque année, un décalage de 10 à 11 jours entre le début du ramadan et l'anniversaire, celle du calendrier grégorien. C'est pour cela qu'il peut avoir lieu en hiver, au printemps, en été ou en automne.

C'est ainsi que le ramadan, qui a commencé le 22 janvier en Jordanie, cette année, avait débuté le 1er février en 1995 et le 12 février en 1994.

Jordanie

Les femmes luttent pour leurs droits

Quatre mois après la conférence de Pékin sur les femmes, un congrès organisé à Amman s'est penché sur la question des droits de la femme.

Dans le cadre du programme national d'information sur l'environnement et l'éducation, les mouvements féministes de Jordanie associés à la société jordanienne d'environnement et à la fondation Friedrich Naumann ont organisé la semaine dernière un congrès à Amman. Cette réunion avait pour but de discuter de l'impact des résolutions prises à Pékin sur la situation des femmes en Jordanie.

La conséquence principale en Jordanie de la conférence de Pékin a été la création par la princesse Basma du Congrès national jordanien des associations féministes (JNCW) qui a comme mission principale l'éducation des femmes dans toute la Jordanie. Il est en effet primordial d'informer celles qui habitent dans des villages éloignés et qui ne connaissent pas leurs droits. Cette organisation qui est semi-gouvernementale, essaie de coordonner le travail entre les organisations gouvernementales et non gouvernementales. Son objectif est de permettre aux femmes de comprendre leurs droits et le sens de l'égalité qu'elles réclament, dans le cadre des us et coutumes du pays dans lequel elles résident.

Dans le monde entier, les femmes demandent la reconnaissance de leurs droits et l'égalité avec les hommes. Le développement, la paix et le progrès au cours des années à venir ne seront possibles sans coopération mutuelle entre l'homme et la femme.

En tant que pilier principal de la famille et de la société, la femme doit avoir des droits légaux et égaux lui permettant de jouer son rôle à côté de l'homme, et non pas contre l'homme.

«Dès qu'il y a un changement de situation, il faut toujours passer par un conflit. Il est important de le rendre démocratique pour que chacun réussisse à jouer son rôle dans

la société», explique Asma Khader, présidente de l'Union des femmes jordanien.

Renforcer l'intégration

En 1985, la troisième conférence internationale des femmes a eu lieu à Nairobi. Elle avait permis de définir une stratégie importante: la promotion de la femme jusqu'en l'an 2000. «Après cette conférence, la situation mondiale a beaucoup changé: la guerre froide s'est arrêtée, et le travail des femmes est devenu de plus en plus important», dit Tagreed Hikmat du JNCW.

daniennes à Pékin était remarquable. Il y avait 27 représentantes de la délégation jordanienne officielle et 110 représentantes de la délégation non gouvernementale», constate Tagreed Hikmat.

La lutte continuera jusqu'à ce que les résolutions votées lors des conférences mondiales soient appliquées partout dans le monde. Pendant le colloque d'Amman, des hommes qui militent pour les droits des femmes ont souligné une des faiblesses de la lutte féministe. Selon eux, les femmes n'ont pas réellement défini les droits

qu'elles réclament.

«Je trouve que la lutte des femmes est un échec dans le sens où elles n'arrivent pas à s'imposer dans la société», dit l'un des participants masculins.

En effet, la participation mondiale moyenne des femmes dans les assemblées parlementaires est seulement de 10%, et 6% d'entre elles occupent des ministères.

Ce qui prouve que les gouvernements ont encore beaucoup à faire pour améliorer l'intégration des femmes.

Oroub El Abed

Irak

Les Irakiennes perdent le chemin de l'école

Pour beaucoup de jeunes Irakiennes, l'embargo à l'égard de leur pays a marqué la fin de leur scolarité. Aujourd'hui, des associations se battent pour leur permettre de retrouver les bancs de l'école.

Nadia a douze ans. Elle semble très émue et concentrée sur la chanson qu'elle répète avec ses camarades de classes, chanson qui loue l'école et condamne l'ignorance et l'analphabétisme. Mais voilà. Le cas de Nadia n'est pas tout à fait le même que celui des autres élèves. Alors que celles-ci fréquentent l'école de façon régulière depuis l'âge de cinq ans, elle, entretemps, est devenue ce qu'elle appelle «une enfant de la rue».

Elle a quitté l'école lorsque ses parents ne pouvaient plus payer les frais de scolarité et avaient besoin du peu d'argent qu'elle pouvait rapporter à la maison. Nadia se tient derrière un kiosque et vend des paquets de cigarettes au coin de la rue.

Faut-il avoir faim et être ignorant ou avoir fait tout en continuant à apprendre? Devant ce dilemme, Nadia et sa famille ont opté pour le deuxième choix. Elle a répondu avec enthousiasme à l'appel lancé par la télévision au travers de publicités incitant les filles déserteuses à revenir à l'école. On leur propose de se joindre aux «classes irrégulières» afin de suivre gratuitement des cours de remise à niveau et s'inscrire ensuite à nouveau dans les classes normales. Maintenant, Nadia va de nouveau en classe le matin, et revient à son kiosque l'après-midi.

Elle est tout à fait consciente du fait que retrouver l'école signifie aussi aller à l'encontre de nombreuses difficultés. L'embargo économique imposé par les Nations Unies contre l'Irak pèse sur les pauvres. Tout est mille fois plus cher. Acheter du papier et des crayons devient impossible. Mais lorsque ce nuage noir qui couvre nos rêves disparaîtra, l'éducation sera le sauveur qui nous conduira hors de ce sombre tunnel», dit Nadia sagement.

Il y a quelques années, le chiffre de l'analphabétisme en Irak était brillant. Quelques mois avant la guerre, ce pays de 19 millions d'habitants pouvait se vanter du fait que la quasi-totalité de sa population savait lire et écrire.

Aujourd'hui, les organisa-

tions non-gouvernementales coordonnent leurs efforts avec ceux des organismes officiels pour inciter les adultes, particulièrement les femmes, à se joindre aux cours d'alphabétisation. Mais le drame est qu'un nombre de plus en plus important de filles âgées de dix à douze ans abandonnent l'école. Avec les conditions de vie particulièrement dures, les enfants sont forcés de travailler et deviennent, dans certains cas, des soutiens de famille.

Un projet pionnier d'éducation

Une étude récente s'intéressant aux effets de l'embargo économique sur les enfants irakiens au niveau psychologique, social, pédagogique et sanitaire a montré que le taux d'abandon de l'école a atteint un niveau très important ces deux dernières années.

Bien que les programmes d'éducation indépendants fassent partie du cadre de l'objectif international «l'éducation pour tous d'ici l'an 2000», avec notamment comme objectif la lutte contre l'analphabétisme parmi la population féminine, le ministre de l'Éducation a lancé un projet pionnier d'éducation avec les «écoles irrégulières».

Ce projet qui a été mis en oeuvre grâce aux efforts de la Fédération générale des femmes irakiennes (GFII) et l'Unicef, aidera à surmonter les obstacles qui, dans les circonstances actuelles, empêchent les jeunes filles de fréquenter normalement l'école.

Selon le responsable du bureau de l'information de l'Unicef, Imad N'meh, les parents font appel aux parents pour encourager leurs filles à s'inscrire dans les écoles qui enseignent ces programmes.

Les filles apprennent la lecture, l'arithmétique et la cou-



Obbligées de travailler dans la rue à cause du blocus, les jeunes Irakiennes peuvent espérer retourner à l'école aujourd'hui.

ture, et reçoivent d'autres enseignements ayant trait à la vie quotidienne. Le prix du tissu neuf étant devenu inaccessible, elles apprennent par exemple à transformer des vêtements déjà utilisés. Le nombre des «diplômées» de ces 450 classes est passé de 7000 filles en 1992 à 14000 au début de cette année.

Selon Fadilah Abbas, une des responsables de l'information au GFII, «17000 filles qui avaient abandonné l'école profiteront de ce programme à la fin de cette année scolaire».

Le ministère de l'Éducation est responsable des aspects techniques du programme. Dans les écoles gérées par la GFII ou les cours ont lieu après les heures officielles des classes normales, la Fédération étale le projet en coopération

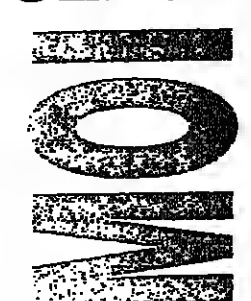
avec le Centre de recherche pédagogique du Ministère.

Les responsables de ce programme baptisé «plus de filles hors de l'école» sont convaincus que le cycle élémentaire est la base essentielle pour fournir un niveau d'éducation acceptable permettant aux enfants de travailler plus tard.

«Nous sommes conscients des difficultés inhérentes à notre tâche car il y a tant à faire dans le domaine de l'éducation», explique Fadilah Abbas. «Et lorsque la faim frappe, elle ne laisse place à rien d'autre. Nous devons persévérer car le taux de désertion des classes est beaucoup plus élevé chez les filles que chez les garçons».

Ljima Nabill

SELON



La guerre d'usure entre l'association de défense des consommateurs de café et les importateurs de café occupe les Jordaniens depuis un mois et va encore alimenter leurs conversations durant les longues nuits du ramadan.

Tout a été déclenché en raison du maintien à un prix très élevé du café en Jordanie alors que son prix mondial a baissé.

Les Jordaniens, par nature, ont tout d'abord manifesté leur colère, qui est montée rapidement en flèche avant de regagner le seuil de départ, sans qu'ils aient obtenu le moindre avantage. On a qualifié les commerçants de profiteurs en les accusant de vouloir s'enrichir sur le dos des pauvres citoyens qui ne peuvent pas se passer de leur café.

Mais en réalité, personne n'a cherché à comprendre les raisons profondes qui poussent les importateurs à rester inflexibles devant ces attaques. Ces commerçants sont de véritables patriotes qui cherchent en fait à protéger et à défendre, contre leur gré, les intérêts des consommateurs.

En faisant du café un produit luxueux que, vu les difficultés économiques, peu de gens peuvent se procurer, ils évitent tous les effets nocifs de ce produit sur le corps, l'esprit et la pensée.

Le café provoque une élévation de la pression artérielle et du taux de cholestérol dans le sang. Il entraîne aussi la sécrétion de catécholamines, comme si nous avions besoin de stress supplémentaire. Pire encore, il déclenche, avec le temps, un état de dépendance néfaste dont il est difficile de se guérir, tout comme l'invocation par la drogue ou l'alcool.

Les importateurs sincères connaissent tous ces dangers et savent aussi que les buveurs de café sont des fumeurs acharnés. Ils veulent ainsi aider les Jordaniens à abandonner le tabac qui dévore nos poudrins et bouche nos artères.

Le café maintient éveillé le jour et vole le sommeil la nuit. La nuit, lorsque les somnambules de notre pays ne trouvent pour seul compagnon que des émissions de télévision d'une grande nullité qui les poussent à acheter des antennes satellites et à porter atteinte à notre culture et à nos mœurs.

D'autre part, les «cafés boulevard» se multiplient dans la capitale et les jeunes y accourent tous les soirs, au lieu de fréquenter des endroits plus intellectuels.

Le café a souvent été source de soucis pour les gens qui fréquentent les cafés populaires où l'on parle de politique et où l'on critique ouvertement les dirigeants. Nos importateurs veulent nous épargner de tels ennuis, et les rois du café veulent éviter l'embarras à nos hommes politiques et à nos écrivains.

Car s'il est vrai, comme dit Pope, que le café donne de la sagesse aux politiciens, ou comme dit Reuter, met l'écrivain au contact des idées du siècle, ce n'est certainement pas le cas chez nous.

Alors messieurs, otez vos chapeaux et présentez vos excuses aux vrais anges gardiens des consommateurs jordaniens.

Suhail Alswais

Activities

Royal Cultural Centre	6610267	Concord Cinema	677420
American Centre Library	820101	Pizza Cinema	699238
British Council	636147/8	Philadelphia Cinema	634144
French Cultural Centre	637009		
Goethe Institute	641993		
Cervantes Institute (Spanish)	610858		
Turkish Cultural Centre	639777		
Haya Arts Centre	665195		
Y.W.C.A.	641793		
Y.W.M.A.	664251		
Dar al Fann	643252		
Alia Art Gallery	639303		
Aladdin Art Gallery	657132		
Nabil Al Mashini Theatre	675571		
Nabil & Hisham's Theatre	625155		

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Orthodox Club	810491
Royal Automobile Club	815410
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Univ. of Jordan Library	843355
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Finnish Consulate	824634/824676	British Midland	694802
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	668191	Turkish Airlines	659102
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	668171/7	RJ Flight Info	(08) 53200
	607338		
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THE STAR'S WORKSTATION COMPUTING & HIGH TECH NOTES

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Computer Companies:

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The governor of PC Software leads the way for other developers to follow: The Microsoft Era

By Khaldoun Al Akkad
Special to The Star

SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT worldwide has been divergent virtually to all aspects and directions of daily life. The need for utmost accuracy, maximum speed, extreme productivity and endless service are the main drivers that push leading computer businesses worldwide to adopt technological policies that focus on state of the art computer hardware and software technologies.

This, in turn, has resulted in the rise of the generation of software giants, who dominate the market with their products. One example is Microsoft who has produced software of virtually all kinds whether operating systems, games, wordprocessors, DTP, communications, finance packages and others.

Moreover, Microsoft believes that it should be the main producer for Internet software that will take us into the information super highway. In the not so distant future, Microsoft may also emerge as the only main power in Networking, through its MSN software found in Windows 95.

The Microsoft Phenomenon, as some people like to call it, resembles total dominance of Microsoft products. Some people go far enough to say that the whole world is living in the Microsoft Era, which was created by DOS, then Windows.

Microsoft today is the gov-

ernor of PC Software and is controlling all its aspects and directions.

In the early eighties, IBM allowed Microsoft to license



Microsoft stamps out the competition

DOS, the operating system of the PC. Accordingly, Microsoft succeeded in making its operating system the dominant one in the PC world.

Later challenges from OS/2, and Macintosh operating system pushed Microsoft to create Microsoft Windows.

Windows also succeeded and Microsoft's latest version Windows 95, is turning into the standard 32-bit operating system.

The fact that the operating system is the brain of computing machines has given Microsoft additional power. This has led, or actually forced, other developers to adopt whatever Microsoft is doing. Third party developers create additional utilities that make that brain more dominant, powerful, and much more wide-spread.

As a conclusion, it is clear that generating demand for any software product today is totally affected by the kind of software market which it is

aimed at, the size of business market and its orientation. Successful marketing and promotional strategies, as well as the long term forecast of the future of software demand are the main aspects that should be awarded much attention if a product is to become dominant. This was the driving force behind Microsoft's continued success and dominance.

With someone like Bill Gates leading the company, it should continue to grow in this direction, but with possibly more challenges in our booming information age.

Still, if Microsoft continues to build on its dominance in all aspects of operating systems and software, it will continue to lead the way for other to follow. ■

NETS & Access, revisited

MANY READERS have been asking about the nature of the services offered by the two leading BBS companies in Jordan; Access and NETS. So here is a detailed 'comparison table' which we had published before to give readers a clear idea on what to expect from both NETS and Access.

Name of service	NETS	ACCESS
Numbers	tel 619870	tel 646368
Subscription	JD 10	JD 10
Max. Connection Time	1 hour	3 Hours
Internet Email Out	JD 0.18	JD 0.17
Internet Email In	JD 0.16	JD 0.16
Special	Refundable deposit JD 35	Three months minimum subscription

Appreciating Jordanian software developers and respecting intellectual property rights: Protecting a Jordanian future in technology

By Rasim S. Abder Rahrho

IN AN effort to create tomorrow's Jordan, or a better Jordan as others wish to call it, there are plenty of steps that should be taken to achieve that honourable future.

For one thing, we should encourage young Jordanian businessmen to invest more in technology and in research and development (R&D).

To support that, Jordanian college and university students should be encouraged to pursue technically-motivated specializations that help create the necessary skilled personnel for technology.

We must protect our national resources that make part of our business heritage, and we have come a long way in building up a Jordanian business identity that is unique to our small country. In a new Middle East, our business identity distinguishes us as good and active partners as we are expected to be.

Also, there's a handful of reputable Jordanian computer companies which, in addition to representing international brands, have succeeded in establishing independent Jordanian initiatives in developing Arabized, customized and tailor-made software and information technology services.

We all agree that there is an emerging Jordanian 'value-added' sector in computeriza-

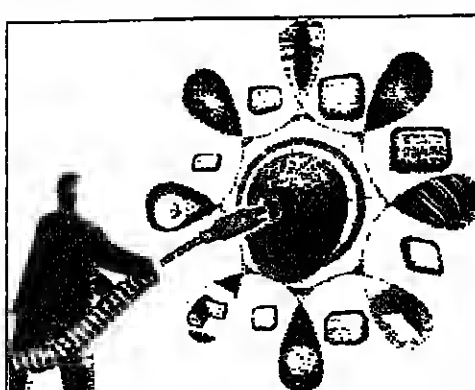
tion and information technology that needs to be heavily safeguarded and closely monitored.

Pirating international names so as to attain quick high-profile and to attract more customers is an old game. The Jordanian technology community does not appreciate any act of intellectual property rights piracy. In other words, the illegal transfer of ownership of a title of foreign trade or service marks and names does not create more business and results in creating a bad example of business ethics in this strategic sector of the Jordanian market.

Successful businesses have never been associated with piracy and bad business ethics.

Due to the increasing local and international competition in offering international technology services, only a few, who are recognized locally and internationally as 'good' business, will be able to carry on. Others will fall as it is usually the case all over the world.

The Jordanian computer community supports every measure that seeks to protect local and international intellectual property rights. The way to doing 'smart-business' and to survive is to innovate by creating, developing and adding value to what we have acquired or produced. ■



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News update

Computer makers slash prices

● Dell Computer and Hewlett-Packard slashed prices today on their personal computers, while Xerox offered rebates of up to \$1,000 on printers in the latest salvoes of an industry pricing war.

Dell's lower prices cover a range of desktop configurations that include high-performance network-ready systems with 166 MHz Intel Pentium processors.

All systems offered with the new price breaks include a high-resolution color monitor. HP cut prices by up to 15 percent on its HP OmniBook 5000 Pentium notebook PCs. Xerox offered rebates of up to \$1,000 on printer and networking options purchases from its XPrint Color Laser Printer.

family.

Firms to improve Cyber-Security

● Netscape Communications and VeriFone say they will devise a system to make electronic payments on the Internet more secure.

VeriFone, a developer of retail electronic payment systems, and Netscape, an Internet software provider, said the new system is "designed to accelerate acceptance of the Internet as a mainstream vehicle for commerce."

In the past, users of Internet-based services have been concerned about the safety of using credit card numbers and making banking transactions on the open computer network.

REUTERS

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

Nothing to show for?

ONE OF the topics that generates a healthy mix of criticism and suggestions nowadays is the effectiveness of computer shows in Jordan.

Upon talking to a number of managers in computer companies over the last week, I have formed a bit of an understanding for what they would like our computer shows to resemble and the best ways they just to get around to doing that.

Apart from the fact that nobody is arguing the importance of shows in educating computer users and marketing the latest products, it's interesting to note that most managers in Jordanian computer companies complain that there are no real trade or specialist computer shows.

What they would like is to target a certain category of professional users through specialized shows that serve that purpose, or through the shows held today. The main issue seems to be that of audience, and that's what we'll be focusing on.

One of the proposals for doing that is by using an invitation-only approach by which every company participating in the show invites the people it wants to attend.

These people are usually professionals who make purchase decisions in private and governmental organizations. In other words, these people represent the corporate buyer who goes for big quantity purchases.

This is what the larger computer dealers in Jordan want to attract professional buyers who understand integrated solutions such as local area networks that utilize Novell and so on.

The general consensus among managers in Jordanian computer companies is that we need to establish a clear difference between consumer shows and trade shows.

This brings to mind my visit to GITEX (Gulf Information Technology Exhibition) in Dubai where there are two simultaneous events running: the GITEX Trade Show for business visitors which focuses on 'business needs and solutions' and the GITEX Shoppers Show for consumers looking for bargains on PC, peripherals and basically anything else. Maybe that's what we should do with the Middle East Technology Show (METS).

That way, we could eliminate the complaints of companies who say that the show isn't targeted at their audience. Actually METS suffers from a bit of an identity problem. It's a show without a defined audience.

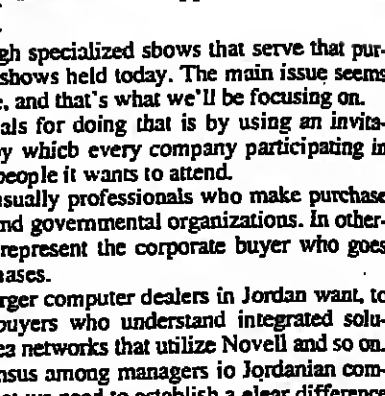
Maybe a separate shoppers show, would mean that all the major computer companies in the country which abstained from participating last year will choose to participate in a well-organized trade show that runs at the same time. Also, that would give an added push to the seminars and lectures offered at the exhibition, as they would be aimed mainly at invited professional users interested in the trade show.

In the midst of this whole argument it's important to remember that nobody wants to cancel consumer shows and that we all believe in the importance of having a computer show which is open to the public. Besides, how else would home users see the latest technology?

However, not every computer company in Jordan sells to the same audience and some of the bigger companies are removing themselves from the retail or consumer market.

In any case, maybe the presence of specialized organizing firms would bring that much needed 'professionalism' that our computer shows lack. ■

METS '96 Shoppers Show



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War crimes probers inspect Bosnian 'killing fields'

Up to 7,000 people are missing from Srebrenica, a UN-designated "safe area" in eastern Bosnia overrun by the Bosnian Serb army, a tragic episode that exposed the impotence of the UN peacekeeping mission and eventually led to the current NATO-led deployment in the Balkans

By Tracy Wilkinson

LA Times-Washington Post News Service
GLOGOVA, Bosnia-Herzegovina—In the first such visit by a high-ranking Western investigator, Washington's senior human rights official toured snow-covered fields thought to hold the bodies of thousands of massacred Muslims and indicated that evidence is mounting to substantiate allegations of the deadliest atrocity in the Bosnian war.

Under the watch of Bosnian Serb police, the official, John Shattuck, also inspected the bullet-pocked, blood-spattered walls of a nearby warehouse

where Muslims were apparently rounded up to be killed, as well as other scenes from the massacres that allegedly followed the fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in July.

Up to 7,000 people are missing from Srebrenica, a UN-designated "safe area" in eastern Bosnia overrun by the Bosnian Serb army, a tragic episode that exposed the impotence of the UN peacekeeping mission and eventually led to the current NATO-led deployment in the Balkans.

"I'm afraid their fate could well be very clear, from the mass graves and mass executions that we've heard about

in the area," Shattuck, assistant US secretary of state for human rights, told dozens of reporters who accompanied him to the site where survivors say the mass graves were dug.

He added that there appears to be "overwhelming evidence" of "horrible crimes" against humanity.

"The accounts I had heard from eyewitnesses whom I interviewed in July... those accounts (of large-scale killing) were very strongly corroborated by what I saw today," Shattuck later said in a telephone interview from the Serbian capital of Belgrade, where he was spending the night.

The allegations of large-scale execution and burial are not new and have been aired since shortly after Srebrenica fell. What is new is the momentum building behind the investigation and verification of the crimes as the fledgling peace in Bosnia Herzegovina opens a window of opportunity and rare access.

Efforts to investigate are also taking on a sense of urgency because of fears the Bosnian Serbs will try to tamper with or dispose of the evidence while North



Atlantic Treaty Organization peace enforcers continue to resist being drawn into the more active role of guarding grave sites. Shattuck, who was escorted by Bosnian Serb police throughout his tour of Serb-held territory, said he saw no signs of tampering by the Serbs and instead said their behavior was a "model of cooperation."



Muslim children will long remember the terrible tragedy that was committed against their people

Until now, Bosnian Serb officials have tried to keep the entire region off-limits to the outside world's probing eyes. But pressure from former paragon Slobodan Milosevic, the president of neighboring Serbia, forced the Bosnian Serbs to grant Shattuck access to the alleged grave sites.

Two investigators from the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague joined Shattuck on Sunday, making their first on-site assessments of the alleged graves. They are gathering evidence for the prosecution of the Bosnian Serbs' two top leaders, Radovan Karadzic and military commander Gen. Ratko Mladic, who have been indicted in the Srebrenica massacre.

More than 35,000 Muslims lived in Srebrenica when Bosnian Serb gunmen, ignoring international pleas, overran the enclave and expelled all of its residents. Mladic presided over the execution, according to survivors' accounts, promising people they'd be safe and then encouraging his men to rape and kill.

As the town fell, an estimated 15,000 Muslim fighters tried to escape through forests to government-held territory. While some made it, many were ambushed; others were captured, rounded up and killed, the survivors say.

Many may be buried here in Glogova, a ghost town of shelled houses and ruins about seven miles north of Srebrenica. Shattuck visited two large clearings just off the main road that appeared to have been recently bulldozed and that yielded bits of clothing and bone.

Shattuck said the site was probably the burial ground of about 2,000 men who surrendered to the Bosnian Serbs.

Disguising themselves as UN peacekeepers to lure the Muslims from their forested hiding places, the Serbs reportedly herded the Muslims into the warehouse of a food-processing company in the town of Kravica, about four miles up the road from Glogova.

The Serbs, survivors said, then opened fire on the corralled men with guns and grenades.

Its modern facade partially charred, the warehouse faces the main road. Inside, bullet and shrapnel holes cover the walls, and what appears to be blood is splattered and smeared in different places.

Shattuck and his team also visited a schoolhouse and gymnasium in the village of Karakaj, about 25 miles north of Srebrenica, where captured Muslims were held before being taken out in groups of 30 into woods nearby and shot, then dumped into open pits, according to survivors. They also inspected purported mass grave sites at a soccer field near the destroyed town of Nova Kasaba, where about 2,000 refugees were said to have been detained before being executed.

"Ultimately justice and long-term peace must go together," Shattuck told reporters at the soccer field. "We cannot hope to see an end to this terrible conflict until the facts are known about what occurred and justice is done.... That's the moral imperative."

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